

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday February 26, 2016

Tony Kanaan

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Tony Kanaan.

Tony, a back-to-back winner here in 2003 and 2004, another second-place finish in 2005, a track you've seen a lot of success at. What does it feel like to be back here at Phoenix International Raceway?

TONY KANAAN: When you have a record like that, it's obviously nice to be back. A slightly different configuration, but it's still one of my favorite racetracks.

One of my best recollections, I gave Michael Andretti's team their first win when they got back to IndyCar. It was here in 2003. A lot of good memories about this racetrack.

So happy to be back and enjoying the Phoenix weather, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned a slightly different configuration than when you won here. What are some of the changes and differences that you noticed?

TONY KANAAN: Obviously the dogleg has a little bit more banking, little bit less racetrack for us because we cannot use the apron the way the NASCAR guys do.

But all in all, I mean, it's not a huge difference. I haven't done any race simulations yet to tell you. I know people are going to ask me how good or bad it's going to be to pass. I would say we got to wait till tomorrow when everybody runs together to see what's going to happen.

THE MODERATOR: Is it hard to get back in the swing of things after the off-season for the first open test of the pre-season?

TONY KANAAN: Actually, not really. But obviously we all feel the off-season, it's too long. It takes a little bit. But we've been testing. Did a couple tests before I came here. I would say the first-ever test at the beginning of the year, we feel a little rust, you feel a little out of place. You feel your car is different, but in reality it's not.

It's nice to see everybody back. Obviously we spend a lot of time together. But seeing all the drivers, all the

teams back, it feels like finally we're starting.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Tony.

Q. Did you ever think you'd see the day when Max Papis would be a steward? What do you think of the three names that have been named as stewards? Seems like a pretty good collection.

TONY KANAAN: It's funny. I'm really close friends with Max. Max actually just worked with us at the 24 Hours of Daytona as a driver's coach. It's nice to have him around. I think they have a big responsibility. I mean, I know two of them. I don't know Dan that well. I know he has a lot of experience. I think it's a good choice.

Like I said, they're going to have tough calls to make, so hopefully they will get it right. It helps we have two drivers there because then you can see from a driver's view, a person that understands about racing, then it's a good balance having Dan there, too. I think it's a good combination.

I hope they're ready to take a lot of heat because that's what's going to happen to them. That's just the nature of the business.

But it's nice to see him around.

Q. (No microphone.)

TONY KANAAN: We're bigger people than that. We're here working. He has a job to do and I have a job to do. We're not going to agree 100% of the time. If I do something, he's going to see it one day, I'm going to see it in a different way.

In this case he has the power to decide. So even if I agree with him or not, at the end it's going to be his decision. I totally understand that.

Let me put it this way: I would not lose a friendship of 25 years because of one race.

Q. With Max and Arie and Dan, you have three people working as stewards. Would you prefer it would be one person as it was long ago?

TONY KANAAN: I like the new format, I would say. I think it will be a little bit more work for them because it's going to be a debate between the three of them. When it's one person's job, it's that point of view and

that's it.

There's two drivers that have driven racecars. I think it's a good combination. Just for fun, we watch races sometimes. Dario and I agree to disagree on plenty of things. He'll give me his point of view. I'll give him my point of view. We come to a conclusion one way or the other.

I think it's a good combination, like I said. It's going to be up to us to obey the rules. They're not driving the cars. We made a few changes over the winter. We worked really closely with Barnhart and Jay and all the IndyCar group with the rule book. I think you guys going to see some changes there that are going to be a lot more clear, taking a lot of load off of the chief stewards. It's going to be more of a black-and-white thing: either you're right or you're wrong. There is no way in between.

I think a lot of people are not going to like that. But we as drivers, representing the drivers association, that was one of the things we worked really hard on with IndyCar. I think Mark Miles heard us. Jay, with his role played a big part. We sat down and we eliminated a lot of things.

I don't even know if I'm talking before we should be talking about this. But you'll see improvement, for sure.

Q. When you come to a test like this, the cars are pretty far apart going around, you never really run with anybody on this track. There have been other tests here, but how do you determine, and maybe you'll do this later today or tomorrow with your teammates, but how do you determine what changes have occurred for the aero kit to find out what you need to run in traffic?

TONY KANAAN: That's it. I mean, you can see that everybody ran the first three hours by themselves. It's been a while we haven't been here. Everybody has a new kit. We're actually just getting used to it and judging obviously by experience.

You're never going to know 100% how good or bad your car is going in before you run with somebody. I think that's what everybody did.

IndyCar did a great job timing because timing-wise this afternoon's session was really close to what the times of qualifying is going to be on Friday when we come back and the night session is going to be the time of the race.

That's why you didn't see anybody running together. Tonight you'll see it a lot. Tomorrow you'll see the same thing, people doing qualifying stuff during the

afternoon and at night racing stuff.

There's no magic. You just have to guess and put yourself out there. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad. The only luxury with that, if it's bad, you can come in and make a change. You have three hours to do so.

THE MODERATOR: Tony, thank you very much.

TONY KANAAN: Thank you.