

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday February 26, 2016

## James Hinchcliffe

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're pleased to be joined now by James Hinchcliffe.

James, this is your first big open test back, aside from some private testing in the off-season, since your accident in May. How does it feel?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: It feels like the first day in school. We traveled to some races in the second half of the year. I still felt like a little bit of an outsider because I wasn't doing my job. To now be back here and be back in the car with everybody, it's great to see all those familiar faces again.

I've been driving the car. Obviously testing and driving IndyCar is phenomenal always, but it's competition that you really miss after a while.

It's nice to be back here with a bunch of cars on track and get sort of those competitive juices flowing again.

THE MODERATOR: What are your initial impressions of the track?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: The track is a whole lot of fun. This is a tough little place. It's incredible how little time you have to think about anything around a lap here. It's so flat out, you cannot let your concentration waiver for even a fraction of a second.

The back straight is not a straight. The front straight is the only chance you have, whether it's to adjust your weight jack, your roll bars, whatever it is. You have about three and a half, four seconds to get it done over a lap. That's exhausting.

Physically the g-forces around a small track like this are very high. The heat is obviously an issue. For us, this is going to be a tough little race, but it's going to be a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: I've been hearing drivers compare it to Iowa Speedway. Is that a fair comparison?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I've been saying it's this weird hybrid between Iowa, Milwaukee and Pocono. One and two is a lot like Iowa three and four. Three and four is a lot like Milwaukee one and two. You have the



dogleg in the back straight, which is kind of like turn two at Pocono.

It makes setting the car up very difficult. It's a huge challenge for the engineers. It's going to be a huge challenge for the drivers in the race, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for James.

**Q. To maybe put this in your terms, the iconic stature of Phoenix Raceway, is it kind of like watching a hockey game at the Forum in Montréal?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I remember being a kid watching IndyCar races around here. To now come back and be part of the comeback, even from the buildup to this test, never mind the race, the feedback from the fans has been incredible. On social media, we've had a lot of feedback from people. The track president said today he's expecting between 5,000 and 10,000 fans to show up for the test tomorrow. I think that speaks volumes for this city and how anxious they are to have IndyCar back. Certainly everybody in the Verizon IndyCar Series is happy to be coming back and bring another iconic venue back on the calendar.

**Q. As you mentioned last year, you came to quite a few races while you were recuperating. Was there anything you picked up during that time?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, timing stands are chaos. I thought engineers knew what they were doing, but apparently not. This is a very fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants business we're in (laughter).

It was very fascinating to sit on pit wall and see how these races unfolded, how decisions were made.

When you're in the car, you get one voice telling you one thing. You just kind of take it as gospel and go from there. For me it was fascinating to see how some of these decisions were made. Sometimes when they come on and tell you something, your thinking, Are you crazy? Why are we doing this?

But now I understand it a whole lot better. I understand how races unfold from a timing standpoint better. I think that's going to make communication between me and the pit stand during races a lot easier. It will certainly give me a little more comfort and confidence that they really do know what they're doing even

though it looks like kindergarten class down there.

**Q. I realize it's only a test, but did you have any feedback with Gabby? What did you think of his opening stint this morning?**

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I think Gabby did a great job. We were down for quite a bit in the middle of that session, making a big change in the garage. Gabby kept pounding around. When we got back out there to check some of the things on the car we found, we had feedback on that. Good progress.

One session, one test day, but so far he's fitting in well and giving good feedback, so it's great.

THE MODERATOR: James, thank you very much for coming.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Thank you, everybody.