

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 1, 2016

Tony Kanaan

Qualifying Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our post-qualifying press conference. We're pleased to be joined by Tony Kanaan, driver of the No. 10 GE LED Chip Ganassi Racing Chevrolet, will start second in the race after qualifying today, his first front-row start since Iowa Speedway of last year. Tony, why don't you briefly give us a summary of how your qualifying run went.

TONY KANAAN: It was pretty good, and the conditions changed a lot since this morning, so it was a little tricky to make a decision in what to do with the car. But I think big props to Chevy and Pratt & Miller on their accurate data because we made some changes in the car. It was totally blind, just according to the numbers they gave us, and it was spot on.

Obviously it wasn't quite enough to get the pole, but I won here from second place before, so we'll try tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the veterans up front.

TONY KANAAN: We're still going. You guys can call us whatever you want, but as long as we're still winning --

THE MODERATOR: You guys have experience around here. You obviously know your way around well.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, that's going to count a lot, especially tonight is going to be a really important session I would say because it's the same time as the race is going to start. You know, we're going to just simulate the race. It's the same time. I think it's supposed to be even hotter tomorrow. So I would say it's going to be tricky, so it will be really I think a really busy 30 minutes this afternoon.

Q. If you're a Honda driver, is there cause for concern, or do you think that this is kind of an anomaly?

TONY KANAAN: I'm a Chevy driver so I don't know how to answer that question. You can ask the Honda drivers that. I don't know. I can't talk about what they have because I don't know what they have. All I know is I'm very happy with the Chevy that I've got.

Q. Tony, the broadcast was covering any wheel

adjustments that the drivers had, and I think you might have had that on your list. Can you talk about that?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah. You know, when you're qualifying at the edge like that, you're asking everything from the car and from yourself. The way qualifying works on the mile oval, you have to go out there from the first lap as fast as you can to get the tire temperature because the track is so short, and you get a green flag like second time by. That's why you see a lot of people sliding because the tires were not up to temperature yet. Usually normally we wouldn't go out that fast to build up -- you always build up speed and have three, four, five laps, but obviously you don't have that luxury in qualifying. That's why you're seeing a lot of people sideways. But also, like I said, I think the temperature raising from this morning, it caught a lot of people by surprise.

Q. Tony, with the desert mountains in the background and all the sand, is this an effect when wind is blowing sand on the track to make it slippery?

TONY KANAAN: It is, but actually if you look at the wind this weekend it's not that strong, so I don't think that will be a concern. There was a concern at the test because it was a little stronger, but I have to say big props to Phoenix. They did a pressure wash of the track last night, because they have a tendency to actually get in between the SAFER barrier and the wall, and by doing that it got a lot better, so I don't think we're going to have an issue this weekend with that.

Q. I'm going to take a stab at this from the other direction. If you're a Chevy driver, how much does today give you confidence?

TONY KANAAN: I think you can look at the grid. That answers you right away. Look at the top 10 there and you tell me what you think.

You know, I think Chevy has been doing a great job for a long time, and props to them. I'm not trying to -- I'm not hammering on Honda at all. I think they are very capable. But this is racing. We knew at some point that somebody was going to be better, and that's just the way it is, and we're not bragging about it because I can tell you that situation can change from one race to the other, so we've just got to keep our heads up and working together with Chevrolet and Pratt & Miller and

those guys to be able to maximize what we've got. If you think about after here we're going to test in Indy next week, that's going to be really important, so we'll be bragging about it here, and then we get there and the Hondas are better, then what? You know what I mean? I think we'll take one day at a time. But I have to say I'm very confident and happy to be with them.

Q. Tony, your teammate Max Chilton is a rookie, but are you starting to be concerned about having to watch for him in your mirrors?

TONY KANAAN: Well, you know, he has every information we've got, and to be honest with you, I've been working very closely with him and Dario, which is the drivers' coach there for the team, and out of all the rookies that I worked with in the past few years, he's the most mature one. I'm not surprised that he's that good. I'm not saying I'm now going to be concerned because I think he has every information I've got. He's very capable, so I know he's going to be good. So we're just going to have to keep working the way we do, the four of us together. We have a pretty good chemistry in the team as far as sharing information. We sit down at the engineer meeting and we're all at the same table. But he's a very mature rookie, so I would say he's going to give us a hard time pretty soon.

Q. You're known for your aggression, especially on bullrings like this. Is the car playing into that, or do you have to be a little more careful?

TONY KANAAN: It's tough to give yourself the props like that, but I would say if you look at the results, I mean, I'm always being extremely competitive, let me put it this way, at the mile ovals. You look at Milwaukee, you look at Iowa, you look at here. I think this is a little bit of both. Obviously I can't make miracles if I don't have the car, but I think my engineer described it the best to me. Todd has been with me for two years now, and he was saying that in his opinion, in his point of view, my ceiling for this type of tracks are a little bit above that of people he worked with before. So I think that is a pretty good compliment. I can't say it because it comes natural to me. All I can say is being back in the Indy Lights days and my first two seasons in Champ Car, I started dead last in every single mile oval. I had to do a lot of work with Steve Horne back in the days of that team to be able to get a grip and understand this type of track, and I think that worked out pretty well.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Thank you very much.