

IndyCar Media Conference

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Scott Dixon

Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



But certainly in practice we have to look -- what we've got to do. I don't recall.

Q. It's rare for a street race to go green the whole way. Would you like to see a longer race next year?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: You're right, it's very rare. I guess that's one of the things related to the aero package. It's very difficult to get close to another guy, at least I was having this issue. I'm not sure about Scott. But I feel that probably those are the scenario. So if you don't get even close, you can't take a chance, or young drivers cannot make mistakes, and the yellow doesn't come up. I don't think it's a matter of long distance. I think it's just a matter of that kind of scenario, and that's why it was very difficult to pass.

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome the second-place finisher today, Scott Dixon, driver of car No. 9, the Target Chip Ganassi Chevrolet, reigning series champion, with a second-place finish today. Still second in the points, 14 behind Simon Pagenaud. Take us through your day today, please.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely a pretty fierce battle up front, a bit of lapped traffic, some pit stop sequence, people trying to pit short, go longer, et cetera, et cetera, so it was quite exciting, I think, for ins and outs and when tos, your overtakes and things like that. I think on the last one we got caught off guard a little bit before the pit sequence had already been finished, and then to hear when we're coming down the straight that the 22 was just coming out, we had actually backed off already and started saving fuel. With the gap that we had on Helio, I really didn't think we had to worry about too much and didn't get any warning from the pits. Obviously that scenario was a lot closer than we anticipated, and then when we got to Turn 1, it appeared that Simon turned a little early and crossed the line that you're not meant to cross. But it is what it is, so second place today, and Team Target did a hell of a job, and pit stops were clean, and I think we had really good pace, but personally I think we should have won the race.

Q. Scott, I'll ask you the same question that was asked of Helio. Coming out of the drivers' meeting, how did you understand that yellow line at the end of pit road, how was that supposed to work for the

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started now with our post-race press conference from today's Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach. We'd like to welcome the third-place finisher from today's race, pole sitter, driver of car No. 3, the Auto Club of Southern California Chevrolet for Team Penske, Helio Castroneves. Take us through your day, please.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: First I want to thank AAA and the entire organization of Team Penske. Obviously Hitachi, Verizon and REV Group. It was a great day starting the day. Basically we led the first half of the race I would say, the wrong half of the race, but it was going no problem, no issues, and unfortunately we started getting traffic. We got a little in the way, and we didn't know what to do. We tried to pass once and unfortunately it couldn't happen. And then when we pit, Scott had the reds. I would have put the reds, as well, but turned out to be one of those deals that Simon ended up going up one lap further plus, but wended up pitting the same with the traffic, so we lost a lot of time behind, so I guess that probably was the key of the race for us from first to third.

And then towards the end, we just had to save a lot of fuel. I just don't understand, since Scott stopped one lap earlier than me why we had to save more fuel than them. That's still -- I'm not sure what happened.

Well, third place obviously is great to collect points, and let's move forward now.

THE MODERATOR: I believe this is your first podium here since you won back in 2001; is that correct?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, last year we finished second, so we didn't finish second, we finished third this year. We're going backwards.

Q. In the drivers' meeting, what was the rule regarding your right-side tires and the yellow blend line coming out of the pits? What did they tell you you had to do with your right-side tires?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I will not go into that. I don't know. I don't remember to be honest what they said.

drivers?

SCOTT DIXON: This one is always very clear and is always mentioned, and we have two drivers' meetings a weekend, and it was clearly stated. I think if you look at the PDF, it's even in the PDF view that everybody gets, and I believe in the first one on Friday, it was asked several times about that. By all means any time you could not put more than two wheels over the line, and that was my understanding. I thought we were done with warnings and all this sort of wish wash stuff and we're going to stick to hard rules, but obviously that wasn't the case today.

THE MODERATOR: If we can clarify at this point, the rules violation that was put into effect was Rule 7.10.1.1, which is lane usage, which reads, "Failing to follow designated procedures entering or exiting the pit area, including the proper use of the acceleration and deceleration zones." Now, within the new penalty guidelines that were established this year for the race stewards, they do have the capabilities of issuing just a warning under that guideline, and that was a decision of the race stewards that it was the best decision in that instance to issue a warning.

SCOTT DIXON: In defense of that, I thought we had outlawed warnings. Yes, a warning was clarified at some point, but this was the problem we had in the off-season with people getting warnings all the time, especially when you're using it to your advantage when it's the last pit stop sequence or anything like that. If you're just going to get a warning every time you're going to do it, that's why this was discussed so deeply in the off-season, and why there was about 40 or 50 warning zones in the rule book removed. Obviously a few topics of conversation after this weekend. I don't even know why we discussed the pit lane exit if we're not going to stick to rules. Everybody else abided by it.

Q. My question is kind of on the same tone. The way I understood you say that is that for that particular rule there's a warning in effect, so what rules have warnings and which rules don't?

THE MODERATOR: There was a guideline, penalty guidelines document that was issued prior to the Phoenix race a couple weeks ago, and as I said, this one does have the ability for the steward to issue either a warning or to order a car to the back of the field for what they determined a mid-level penalty or a maximum penalty, which would be a drive through and/or a stop-and-go penalty. The race steward decided to issue the warning in this instance.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Do you guys have a question for me or not, because I'm not going to be discussing about the rules.

Q. Helio, what was the biggest difference in the

race versus qualifying? In your car why weren't you able to keep it up front the most? It looked like if you went low downforce, tire wear was an issue.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Tire wear was some but not all of it. Most of it was the fuel, which I still kind of not understanding. We finished kind of like, in the end, we still have Push-to-Pass with the car, but I couldn't use it because I couldn't burn fuel. I think maybe we short pit the last one and that's why I have to make it up. We did have an incident in Barber last year that we have to stop on the last lap, so I just knew that those two guys were battling, and I knew Simon went two laps ahead of me, so I said I guess I have to wait for an opportunity for yellow or something like that so that I can attack, but other than that, it was most of the fuel, and I have to keep saving.

Q. How important were the reds and the blacks in your performance today?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: They were very interesting. The blacks were not so strong, I have to say. I was much better on the reds, especially long distance because the reds do stay up with me pretty good, but the blacks were a little bit harder. As soon as we start on blacks we were about three seconds ahead of Scott, and he caught up pretty quick. Again, I was trying to save a little bit of fuel, but I knew I would have traffic, so I was trying just to manage that scenario, the traffic and tires at the same time, because I noticed that it would be very difficult to have a yellow, but unfortunately it was a little bit harder with the blacks.

Q. The changes made to the track, did they affect the cars dramatically? The curbing they changed and so forth, is it better than it was or is it more difficult?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, it was pretty similar than before, I guess. It was not much of a change. It does get a little bit faster in Turn 8 because of the curbing and plus people are taking the same line. Again, I think that the hardest part was following people, and that's related to some of the aerodynamics, different aerodynamics, at least in my case. But it was consistent all the way, and it was just a shame that we had to save so much fuel in the end.

Q. Scott, just to try to put a little positive spin on the day, there's been a couple of years ago you'd leave here maybe after a 15th-place finish, a 12th-place finish, combined with maybe a bad race at St. Pete, but so far so good with your season, and you've got to really feel good about that because it's been a while since you've started off the season strong. I think it was '08 and you won a championship that year.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, you know, it's definitely a positive start, but a win is a win. When it's in scenarios

like this that you shouldn't be really fighting over how things are called, and victories are so tough to come by these days, you know, you want to -- when your car is good and you do have a good race and reliability is good, you definitely want to strike while the iron is hot. So yeah, absolutely a positive start so far three races in. It's still very early, but the competition is very, very tight, as well, and obviously with Simon winning today, that stretched his points lead a little bit over us. But yeah, as you said, it is a positive start for Team Target.

Q. Scott, you're pretty collected; is that Kiwi reserve, or do you have a speed bag at home to take out some frustrations?

SCOTT DIXON: Well, I was pretty mad once I got out of the car even with the last sort of 15 laps waiting for a drive-through or at least a swap of positions. I was even a little mad at Simon after the race, but it's not his fault. You've got to try to take advantage whenever you can, but he doesn't make the rules or put the rules forward. Huge credit obviously to Simon. He raced a fantastic race, and it was a great win for him and the team. You know, I can't be mad at him, so I'll direct my anger some other direction.

Q. Despite all that, coming off the hairpin in the last turn, you had a really good run on him. Can you talk about that a little bit?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I was hoping that maybe that traffic was going to come a little earlier. We were pushing pretty hard. We had new reds at the end, whereas I think the competition, they had all used them at the start. We were definitely in a good situation there. But I'd also been pretty aggressive on overtakes on in-and-out laps to try and get those positions apart from the last one, which caught us out there, but yeah, it came kind of a little too late, and I think Simon actually was still on overtake for the last one, and I was already out.

Had that come maybe three or four laps earlier, it could have been pretty interesting.

Q. During those five, 10, 15 laps where you thought maybe the penalty might have been called, do you race any differently thinking the penalty is coming or do you press just as hard because it might not?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, there's moments where you kind of try to get a little more of a gap just to cool things off around these places, especially like Long Beach when you're trimmed out a little bit and you're racing really close. I think we had a pretty tight gap on the 22. You can overheat the tires and brakes and stuff, so you go through highs and lows of when to attack and when not to. Obviously 15 laps from the end, I was pretty angry, but even a little bit earlier -- but it doesn't really affect, I think, what you're trying to do. You can only do

as much as you can with the car at that point.

Q. I have two questions. Could you see the violation? Did he not appear where you thought he would as you're coming down the front stretch?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it definitely seemed a lot closer. When you're coming down there and we go through this scenario every practice session, every qualifying, et cetera, et cetera, and typically when you see the car, they still have to go down quite a ways to then turn back, which tries to stop the cars merging or hitting each other on the exit, and it seemed closer than normal. But when you're in those confines and going at the speeds you are, it is sometimes a little hard to judge.

Q. You've been to a lot of racetracks around the world; can you imagine some sort of physical barrier, rumble strips or whatever, not to block the track for people not pitting, but can you imagine some barrier that would take away the whole idea of a judgment call there so you've got to go around it or you don't?

SCOTT DIXON: It shouldn't be a judgment call. It's a rule, so that's what it comes down to.

Q. Helio mentioned that he thought that the aero parts and pieces this year make it a little more difficult to get behind somebody. Did you find when you get close that you had trouble controlling your car or making a pass?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I think with the aero kits, it has been a little more -- I definitely spoke pretty freely about it last year. If you've got big wings and more wings and less underwing, the underwing is pretty dead right now with no strakes and big holes in the front of it, so the under part of the car doesn't really produce much downforce. As you can see with everything that's thrown on the top of it, obviously it disturbs the aero a lot more. So yeah, we've seen that. Plus with the increase of downforce, as well, I think the increase is lost when you follow closely in a similar amount of percentage.

Q. Scott, I'm curious what it's like for the driver in the cockpit, just how far in front they can see with the way the front wing is, because when Simon was interviewed after the race he was asked about that exit and the warning, and he said, well, the rule was as long as I kept my right-side tires to the right of the dots, I was fine, and he clearly missed like about three feet of those -- there's some little things down there just to the right of those yellow lines, so he thinks he didn't violate anything until he'll see the video, but I'm just wondering what you can actually see in the cockpit.

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I don't know how many

times we go in and out of the pits over a weekend, but a lot. You can see it pretty clearly, yeah.

Q. Now that Simon has gotten off to a good start and he's won a race, the monkey is off his back at Penske, how concerning is that for him as a championship contender?

SCOTT DIXON: You know, I think when you look at competition, it's eight or 10 deep. It's never one person. I think Penske is obviously always a yardstick for us, and nine times out of 10 if we're racing for a championship, one of them is going to be the one to beat. You know, they're all very accomplished drivers, always very fast, and a team that they have a wide array of things to -- whether it's strategy or just straight-out speed. Yeah, he's for sure going to be a competitor for the championship.

Q. Scott, considering you went longer on the first stint, to go 28 laps, save the fuel, were you surprised at all that you kind of went for the undercut for the second stop, not knowing whether Pagnaud would be in it or not?

SCOTT DIXON: There's a few reasons you do that. We had traffic that was coming pretty quickly, but then also a big rule of thumb typically is you want to be the first car to pit on the last stop, eliminating yourself getting hung out by yellow. I think there was a couple of -- obviously I haven't spoken to Michael or Chris or anybody on the team to see why we did that, but I can see why they may have come to that decision, one being traffic, and second pitting as early as you can on the last pit stop.

Q. A lot of the drivers afterwards were saying that it was very difficult to pass. What was the reason for that, and how much Push-to-Pass did you use?

SCOTT DIXON: I used all of them. They were gone. I think with about 40 laps to go I only had two left. Yeah, you know, I tried a couple of goes at Simon, and the tough thing now with the downforce that we have, the brake zones are getting so small. It's hard to maybe come back from a long way and really brake late and get a big advantage out of it.

I didn't feel comfortable going any deeper than I did, and it wasn't enough to pull off the pass, and he was obviously covering all bases and putting the car in the middle of the road, too, as you would.

Yeah, it was a little tougher than normal, and I think right now with the aero kits, you can trim out quite a bit, too, so it makes it a little bit harder for the competition behind.

Q. When he came out of the pits just in front of you on that last stop, since your tires were already

warmed up, it seemed like that would be your best advantage to either get him going into 6 or at the end of Seaside, but you just couldn't make that pass. How quickly then did the tires come in on the out lap? Was it the heat that helped that, that kept you from making that pass?

SCOTT DIXON: They come in, the reds come in really quick. By Turn 5 -- the rule of thumb typically on reds, as long as you get through the fountain. Even on blacks we pulled it off in front of Simon before that earlier in the race, which the blacks take a good lap and a half to come up, but the reds come in really quick. That's why at that point it was going to be extremely tough, and it's hard to know what overtakes and stuff he had left. But maybe we used them a little too freely early on in the race, but yeah, the reds come in super fast.