

IndyCar Media Conference

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Ryan Hunter-Reay Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Ryan-Hunter Reay joins us, and Ryan, you've been here for the ultimate press conference, which is the goal coming in, and that's the final one of the month. You know how these things can switch around, but I don't know, I guess if I had a choice, I'd still want to be at the top of that group at the end of the day. Is that how you feel about it?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Absolutely. Coming off the year we had here last year where I couldn't get the car to do anything I needed it to, it's nice to have the 28 DHL Honda up towards the front, especially here at Indy. This is what we wait for all year, to get back on track here, start working with the car, feel the energy of the biggest race in the world. We're working through things, working through setup, some qualifying stuff, some race stuff, just getting in the mix, getting in traffic, and it's been a pretty -- it's been a fun day, a challenging one at times. You know, when that wind switches around, it certainly throws you for a loop. Compared to yesterday it's been a big change. But I was pretty happy with the car there at the end.

Q. Will just said the Hondas are plenty fast, says qualifying won't be like last year.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I'm just waiting for him to turn the wick up. I'm not sure when that's coming.

Q. I thought I heard you say to him, we're waiting for it.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, Will and I are always giving each other jabs, but yeah, I fully expect things to come a little bit more into the norm by the time we get to Friday. You know, some of those Chevys out there look really good in traffic. We felt good, so we'll see. It's early days still. I know better than to start thinking that I have a shot yet.

Q. But I also like the fact that you are never shy and speak your mind.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yep. Well --

Q. You usually come out and say if something's not right, it's not right, and I think we're all wondering about Andretti, the team, and making a move forward and how things can turn around in this race.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, this is a race that this team has been historically very strong at. Through the years it's been one that one driver or the other, you're going to have an Andretti Autosport car up towards the front somewhere. We've got some setups that we fall back on, some that we have in our back pocket if we need, so we have a lot of data. That's the great thing about running a big team like that.

Q. In looking at the times, it's been your team that's been up front, but when we take a look at the first goal, which is to get in that top nine and get into the Shootout ultimately for the pole position, do you still fully expect to see a Pagenaud, a Will Power, someone --

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Oh, yeah.

Q. You're not crying this entire tale of woe?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I'll put money on it. I will. Once the boost gets turned up, everything changes. You have different torque curves in these engines, different -- where some are better in other areas, and it'll be all over the place. Come Friday, yes, absolutely expect Ganassi, Penske, Carpenter, these guys all to be up in the mix. Hopefully we're still in the mix.

Q. I apologize for going backwards, but I'm moving forward with the question. When you won, that day couldn't have been more meaningful. Last year did it feel like you didn't have a shot?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, last year we didn't -- from the beginning -- we found out later in the year that we had some issues with our car, aero-wise, that we changed for the second half of the year. We had a great finish to the season, winning Pocono, winning Iowa.

It was something where, yeah, we couldn't get out of our own way here last year, and when you don't have a car -- you have a car that doesn't do what you need it to do, which is what I need to do in traffic, where the front of the car works and things like that, I didn't have that last year.

Q. And the point I want to get at, I've talked to a few drivers already this year, and that's their bottom line. They just want to have a shot at it; just give me something that'll give me a shot at it.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: That's all. I just want a chance,

like Jim Carrey in "Dumb and Dumber."

Q. That's it, right, because last year, just again, not harping on it, but you didn't really get a good chance to defend your title?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I didn't get a good chance to really -- yeah, take a run at it, and at least be up front mixing it up. That's what hurt the most. We spent all day like 15th or worse. It was tough. It was tough to live it through that way.

Q. Not to live in the past, but winning this race once, there's prestige with that. There's that extra thing after your name. There's that, don't ever count this guy out, right, whether you or TK or whomever maybe are not getting the results you want?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: That's the way it should be, absolutely. Don't ever count them out, yeah. Like you were saying, if I have a chance, hopefully I'll be one of those guys. Absolutely love this place, love the way it races, and hopefully we just stay the course here.

Q. Honda hasn't really -- aero kits didn't change here this year for you guys.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Right.

Q. Is it on the team side that you obviously found something?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think so. I mean, we've found some things with the setup that we really didn't like last year, and we've improved on them for this year. For the 28 side of it, we had some issues that we fixed halfway through the year last year that we found out really doing our Indy 500 effort. Yeah, all of the above, I think.

Q. The question America really wants to know is will there be two racing uniforms this year?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I think so. I think both of them will be in there.

Q. Ryan, Will was having some fun with Gabby and said, it's too bad you guys can't run the strakes because I don't think Gabby -- he was jabbing him. These Hondas are so fast, and gee, it's too bad -- Montoya probably had the best line of the day. He said, "Let the sandbagging begin."

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: So they are sandbagging. (Laughter.)

Q. How hard is it to get by yourself so you're not fooling anybody and just run by yourself and know where you're at?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we've done that, and you can look at the notes and reports on that. It seems like the Andretti Autosport team has kind of moved their

program up a little bit compared to others, focusing on this weekend and occasionally on the qualifying side. But ran a lot in traffic today, and I fully expect -- before you got in here, we were just talking about it; I'll put money on it, that you'll have the Penskes and the Ganassis right up where they -- the ECR cars right where they always are, yeah. Something is a little strange, but we'll see. I don't know.

Like I was saying before, I know better than to get ahead of myself at this point thinking that I have a chance.

Q. (No microphone.)

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's not. It doesn't matter. It matters none, really. I mean, you can kind of see the cars that do have some speed in them, I think, but other than that, when you're dealing with big groups like that and big tows, you know, it's fun to put up a big number, and I think anybody in the top six or seven could have put up a very similar number. It matters to some extent. I've been here some years where I can't get off the second screen, when it rotates, the whole time. So that matters for sure.

Q. I will point out that I've been doing this a long time, and people that come into this room day after day, while that ultimately may not matter, they're also in this room later in the month. I mean, there still is something to that.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, they -- I mean, a fast car is a fast car when you come here. Hopefully that's the case. Hopefully, like I said, just need a chance.

Q. How does it feel when you're close to another car with the extra ride height?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's tricky for sure. You can see everybody is kind of -- if you have the first car in line or the second car in line, right, maybe even the third car in line, life is okay for those guys. It's not that hard. I mean, it's the same old deal. You can poke your nose down and get some clean air. It's the fourth-, fifth- and sixth-place cars, that's where you really see who has a good race car, when you're deep in the pack, if you can start making passes. That's where it was tricky for us today. With as nice as it was today and the conditions as they were, which is not that much wind, I was surprised how challenging it was out there today, and that might be because of the added ride height. I'm not sure. I really don't know. But one thing is it's the same for everybody. We've got to work on it, and it was definitely tricky out there for a while today.

Q. We've all said the same thing forever. We want it to be tougher so the good guys can show their ware. We don't want it to be too easy. Is it that kind of tough? Is it that kind of tricky?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think, yeah, today was tricky enough where you had to have some experience around this place. But if it's 90 degrees on race day, it might make for a boring race. I'm not sure. It might spread it out a little bit, and I'm not sure yet. Just knowing how nice today is, our usual -- in usual circumstances, this is beautiful conditions. Cool, you're wearing a sweater. That says that a lot. You know what I mean? That means it's a nice day at Indy. Once you got up into the hotter temps, 85, 90 degrees, this place becomes a different racetrack.

Q. Do we have the kind of sophistication based on the comments about the aero packages to go back and look at data from a year ago and say, this is the difference that the ride height made?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: We'll certainly look at that. I don't know the answer to it, but hey, it is what it is. Everybody has it at this point, and you know, we saw on the group runs, I think there was some pretty good mixing up, you know. In these conditions, I expected it to be a bit easier in these conditions for sure, so whether that is directly related to the added ride height, I'm not sure, but it is one added factor for sure.

Q. It may be too early to tell, but do you feel it is an even match now between Honda and Chevy?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Too early to tell. I can't even go there yet. It's Wednesday. We've got a long way to go. I'm happy with where we are at the moment. You know, like I said, I've been here before and it's been dragging around towards the bottom half of the field, and you can't get out of there every day. That means you just don't have a fast race car. The good thing is we have speed in the car, it's good in traffic, and we'll focus on making it better tomorrow and then move into Fast Friday.