

IndyCar Media Conference

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Helio Castroneves Juan Pablo Montoya James Hinchcliffe Carlos Munoz Scott Dixon

Fast Six Press Conference



morning. And when you normally wholesale the car like that, you normally screw it up more, but we nailed it, so it was good.

THE MODERATOR: On the far left we're joined by Scott Dixon, the reigning Verizon IndyCar Series champion. Scott will start sixth tomorrow after a lap in the Fast Six of 1:16.4613 seconds. Scott, I know you were a little disappointed with the result there in the Fast Six. What happened?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't really know. I don't know if we got the tires on the wrong way or what, because we only had one fast lap on that set, and yeah, it was kind of strange. Our car was really fast on blacks. We didn't use a new set of blacks in qual, and I feel like we could have run much faster times on my used blacks. So it was really bizarre. I don't know, we did the one fast lap on that one set of reds, and the car was horrible. I don't know. Excited for tomorrow. I know the car is obviously going to be really good on black tires, and they seem to be lasting really well. We've had good speed in both sessions today. It's just kind of when it counted there in Q3, we just had nothing, and then we had a throttle sensor fail, too, so the last two laps we couldn't get full throttle. I don't know, we'll see what happens tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined by Carlos Muñoz, driver of the No. 26 Magneti Marelli Honda for Andretti Autosport. Carlos tied his season best career qualifying by qualifying fifth today, 1:16.3897. Talk us through your qualifying today.

CARLOS MUÑOZ: Yeah, I think it was like more or less like this, Dixon. I brushed the wall in Q2, and that held the car a lot for the Fast Six. We tried some stuff for the Fast Six, and it didn't work, but it's my first Fast Six with that like normal conditions, so just really happy. I was the best of the team, so I think it's a good position to start the race. I was here last year on the wet, and I think it's a good position to start the race. I think we still have work to do. I think I got everything out of the car. I think that was the limit. We saw that Team Penske was really strong here. We'll have to work a little bit more for tomorrow, practice.

THE MODERATOR: Helio Castroneves will start second after a lap of 1:14.9285 seconds. Helio set the

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Juan Montoya, driver of the No. 2 Team Penske Chevrolet. Juan will be starting third in tomorrow's race after qualifying in the Fast Six with a lap time of 1:15.5659 seconds. Juan, if you'd just tell us a little bit about the qualifying session today.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It was really good to be honest with you. Our Verizon Chevy has been pretty good. We actually struggled a lot this morning. You look at how fast our teammates were, I was like 13th or 15th this morning, so we pretty much changed everything on the car, and it worked well. I mean, we felt we needed to do a lot of changes, and it worked pretty well.

The car in black tires didn't drive that well, but on reds it did, so it was good. I was actually surprised to see Simon, how well he did on those blacks.

THE MODERATOR: So Penske is one, two, three starting tomorrow. Obviously you guys are doing something right. Is there going to be a lot of sharing of information here in the debrief?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: We do share a lot. I mean, it's good because, yes, I struggled, but my teammates were really quick, so it's easy to see how the car is set up, what are they doing. You can look at their videos and see where are they going and what's going on. It's easy to learn and figure out what you need, and it paid off. I was actually surprised I qualified third. I was hoping I wouldn't be out in the first group, put it that way.

THE MODERATOR: Why do you say that?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Because I was 13th this

track record in segment 2 of qualifying at 1:14.6899. Helio, I know you really wanted the pole. Talk us through your qualifying today.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, I set the records on the wrong session. But great job, Hitachi boys. The car was really, really strong out of the box, out of the truck basically it was really strong. When we did the fast lap, we didn't know what to do about the blacks, and at the end of the day, we picked a choice, and I think we were so close. I wish they would have told me -- sometimes they talk a lot and sometimes they don't say enough, and I wish they would tell me, just squeeze a little bit more, even if I have to finish with three wheels, I would go for it. But it was a great job, one, two, three for Penske here in Detroit, Roger is super proud, super happy, and for us, we couldn't be more happier to be honest to give that Roger. Hopefully tomorrow we finish with a win, as well.

THE MODERATOR: James Hinchcliffe qualified fourth today, 1:15.7708 seconds. James, tell us about how things went for you today.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, I mean, pretty reasonable day, I think. We rolled off the trailer with a good package, and when you only have one practice session, that's the most valuable thing you can have, so big credit to everybody at Schmidt Peterson for doing their homework on this place. I wasn't here last year, and the cars have changed quite a bit, certainly in the Honda camp, and coming back here we kind of had to relearn a few things to try and get it done in that first 75-minute session was a good effort by the boys, and qualifying and everything was pretty straightforward. It's tough to get a perfect balance around here. It's so bumpy, you're in the air as much as you're on the track, so it's tough to tell the engineers kind of which direction to go with the car, but obviously they did something right, and I was holding my breath there for three laps in Q2 trying to make it in the Fast Six, probably to be able to do that again, get a second row start, and we'll see. It's going to be a long, tough race tomorrow, and then we have to do it all again on Sunday, so this is just the first phase of a very long weekend from here on out.

Q. Whoever wants to answer, it's kind of a strange weekend in the fact that it's a double-header, but also two completely different types of qualifying sessions for each race. What are your thoughts on that? They've been doing it that way the last couple years, but having the regular street course session like we had today, and then on Sunday it's just kind of an abbreviated 15 minutes at a pop?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: It's tough. You know, the Sunday qualifying obviously is not how we normally do

things, and if you're in group 2, you have a much better shot at pole. It's not necessarily the fairest way of doing it. Normally we get three sets of red tires for one qualifying in one race; here we get three sets of red tires for two qualifying in two races. Why we don't just get an extra couple sets of reds and do it properly both days, I don't know. But that's how I'd prefer to do it for sure.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, basically we try, always try, and I think the promoters obviously want to have Friday to -- it's free for everyone to come, and they want to give a little bit more entertainment. It's always good to try something, and at the end of the day, we've just got to keep going, and hopefully for good weather, and see what happens.

Q. James, you look across the row here and you're the only guy here who's not from one of the big powerhouse teams, and eight of the top nine spots went to those three teams today. How tough is it for teams like yourself to compete with the Penskes and the Ganassis and the Andrettis?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, we're a little powerhouse team, I guess. We got all three cars in the top 10 in qualifying at the 500, and we got both cars into the top 12 here today. No doubt it's tough. We've worked really hard to try and keep up with these guys. Obviously the Penske guys and the Ganassi guys have been very strong, and Andretti with Carlos being represented up here, they struggled with their other car, so awesome job to him. It's great to see a couple Hondas in the Fast Six obviously. But it's the nature of the beast. It's a super competitive series, so even a dominant team is only dominant by a tenth or two. If we do our homework every week, then hopefully we can find that tenth or two. It's not an unachievable goal, and we can keep racing with these guys week in and week out.

Q. Helio, were you aware that you set a course record out there, and if so -- it's interesting because you set it in the 12 and then it doesn't carry over to help you get the pole. Is that an interesting little quirk?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, like I said, I was supposed to do that track record on the last one, not the first one. But at the end of the day, you don't pick and choose. You do your best, and unfortunately the last one we just -- my car somehow feels very good on the blacks and not so much comfortable -- we tried Q1 and I was struggling a little bit, and then Q2 was just absolutely awesome, and we were debating what to do, and we decided to just go with the red, and maybe it wasn't the right choice, but it is what it is. At least starting the front row is always good, so we'll go get them tomorrow.

Q. Is the track tougher than it was last year? Has it become bumpier? A few people are not seeming to be too happy about it.

CARLOS MUÑOZ: I think it's a little bit bumpier some parts of the track for sure from last year, front stretch is a little bit more bump than used to, but it's the same for everyone, right, so you have to adjust the car for it, and unfortunately it's a bit more bumpy.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Montoya and I think it's fantastic. It shouldn't change a bit. Actually it should get more bumpier.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: There is probably, what -- I think there's like three or four bumps they need to fix. Everything else is really good. I think the track has got a lot of character. One-two segments, the last two corners, there's really good character that makes it really tough. Every corner the grip level changes so you've got to be on your toes all the time. You've got to brake over bumps. It makes it really interesting. Yeah, there's a couple bumps, one past pit entrance and a couple on the back straight that are a little too big. Apart from that it's fine, I think. Was Marco complaining?

Q. Carlos, you won here last year. It was a rain race. The strategy was kind of up in the air. Possibility on Sunday there might be a little bit of rain, so just what your thoughts are when you start thinking as a team how to win rain races which are timed rather than laps.

CARLOS MUÑOZ: I feel really comfortable in the rain the whole time. I think I'm really fast in the rain, as well. But you know, this year Honda has made the aero kit much better. Like last year I didn't feel the downforce. This year I feel more the downforce, and it's much more physical this year because I feel the downforce. But yeah, I have a good starting spot, fifth, but it's IndyCar. It also depends on the strategy. But you have to be quick. Like I said, my first Fast Six, like normal Fast Six, so you know, my teammates are saying they're a little bit in the back. I don't know what happened to them. But you know, I think we have to still work in, work to do like as a team in the road courses and street courses. I think we are behind a little bit still.

Q. Helio, at the Angie's List Grand Prix when the race was over, you made the comment that Roger was giving you so many reports you really didn't want him to tell you. But now are you going to go back and tell him that he didn't give you enough information about qualifying?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'm not going to say anything. He does a very good job, let me tell you. I think the

drivers complain more sometimes than they need to, so I will not say anything.

Q. Now, as far as the bumps out on this track, Hinch said that you're in the air part of the time. You know, is this something that in terms of trying to actually drive through the track itself, are there times when you hit so hard that you could have a headache or you're banging yourself around in the car, maybe lose your foot off the brake or the throttle? How difficult is it?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, that's the character of this place, and it is. It can happen to me. It can happen to anybody here, especially when the tires start degrading a little bit, and you might all of a sudden not expect or hit the bump in a wrong spot. It's the same for everyone, you know, and whoever makes probably less mistakes is probably going to be in good shape.

Q. Hinch, do you think the performance in Indy last weekend is going to help you moving forward into this weekend's race, considering you're starting fourth?

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: You know, you're going from the biggest, widest-open track that we go to the tightest, bumpiest place that we go. There's not a whole lot that translates. So for us it's nice having the momentum and the team certainly, and that gives everybody on the team a bit of confidence, but to run well at the Speedway and come here on a completely different polar opposite racetrack and run well again, it's just -- it speaks volumes how hard these guys are working on the Arrow car and how prepared we are coming into these weekends. Running around up front at Indy doesn't really give you any experience that's super valid running around up front here, but competing at the front in races is good. Having that pressure, pressure in pit stops, things like that and the whole team has been performing well, so hopefully we can carry that form forward this weekend.

Q. Carlos, how did you get through this week? This had to have been a really tough week coming off how close you could have been, and did that give you any renewed confidence or focus to come out here and just want to continue to be on top?

CARLOS MUÑOZ: Yeah, you know, like I say, the next day, I forgot about the second place, whatever. A lot of drivers wanted to finish second, that's for sure, and they were home watching the race. Like I said, I think I said to you, I haven't been driving so good I think this year. I've been driving so good, even the results didn't show a lot in the road courses, but for the package we have, I had or whatever I had in that moment, I think I've never been so good driving. So the result doesn't show it, but for me emotionally, I've been driving the best ever in my career right now, this year.

Q. Helio, does it seem like it's been 16, 17 years since you climbed the fence here?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No. It feels like yesterday. It's so funny, it's so awesome to see the fence bringing over memories like that, and it just gives you a little more extra. That's why as frustrating as the race -- when we didn't get the pole position, because this place is really, really cool.

But it feels like it was yesterday.

Q. Mr. Montoya, do you think if they fixed the bits of this track at its worst, would you like to see the event back here next year?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: What do you mean at its worst?

Q. You mentioned bits of the track like the bumps that are --

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: There's two bumps, three in the back straight, one here. It's four bumps.

Q. Otherwise it's good?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Yeah.