

IndyCar Media

Conference

Saturday June 4, 2016

Sebastien Bourdais Juan Pablo Montoya

Conor Daly

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with the post race press conference. We are joined by our third-place finisher, Juan Pablo Montoya.

Juan, podium finish. I believe you said on TV you had some issues near the end of the race.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Yeah, after the last stop, we started having issues on the right side or something. Got stuck open, had no pressure. But it was okay.

We started pushing. To be honest with you, we sort of went away. But it was a smart call. We were trying to play the rain. When we restarted, we never really pushed. We were trying to make sure we could make it to the rain, and the rain never came.

It is what it is. We tried to run a smart race, but it didn't happen. We got a decent podium out of it, so I'm pretty happy about that.

THE MODERATOR: Early race strategy, so many cars came in early to change from the Firestone alternates to the blacks.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: To be honest, always happens here in Detroit. This is the only place where the reds are actually slower. This is the opposite. It's kind of weird.

It's actually kind of cool, the black tires, at least for me, the longer I run, the faster I go. We sucked the first five, eight laps. All of a sudden the tires, like you spin the tires, you understeer, all of a sudden it's like you're turning and the thing just hooks. It really sits down, jumps on the corners. It's pretty good fun.

THE MODERATOR: Scott Dixon ran a faster lap today than was set in qualifying yesterday.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: That is insane. I think qualifying tomorrow is going to be pretty interesting.



THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Juan.

Q. Juan, what happened between yourself and Will?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Just Will I think is a little desperate right now for results, so he'll do anything. That's what it is. It's the truth.

THE MODERATOR: How do things change for tomorrow with possible rain?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It was supposed to rain all race today and it never did. We even talked about it in our strategy meeting, putting a full wet setup before the start of the race. If you looked at the radar, a lot of rain was coming.

I think it's just starting right now. It's a little late, a couple hours late.

Q. Have you had a chance to run on the rain tires? I don't know if anybody has run the grays.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I think it's the same tire, isn't it, just painted the side? Not in a bad way (laughter).

Q. I think it was new at Mid-Ohio and hasn't been used yet.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Then it's a different rain tire.

Q. Not the same tire at Toronto.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: I don't know if you run the same on a street and road course, wet tires, I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

To be honest with you, I just thought (indiscernible) people would know when the rain tires were on.

Q. Tomorrow you have to run the red tires again, you only have three sets, so you have all used sets.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: No, I have a set of reds, sticker reds. We actually didn't use them today. I qualify on blacks. I think you'll see everybody qualify on blacks tomorrow.

Look at everybody's pace. It's amazing. We're running 77-second lap times on reds. You put the blacks on, you went two seconds quicker instantly. It was unbelievable.

It's amazing. You can push them every lap. You can beat the hell out of them lap after lap after lap and they don't go away. Honestly, the harder you drive them, the more they give you. It's pretty cool.

Q. (No microphone.)

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: He's been having a tough season. He wasn't (indiscernible) the first race. He couldn't race. I think he's been trying to catch up.

I don't know. To be honest, I was on cold tires. If he would have arced the corner, he would have come across me and would have passed me anyway. He actually nearly ruined my race.

I was smart enough to know how aggressive and how far he's willing to go. It's kind of crazy, but it's his choice.

Q. Do you intend to have a conversation with him about it?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: No, I'm just going to ask him if we can race that far. The rules are clear. If we're willing to go that far, then it's good to know.

Q. Juan, how big is this result for you after being first out at Indy?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It's okay. I mean, it's a race, it what happens, Indy. Yeah, I mean, I don't think about it. It really doesn't change anything. You can have good races, bad races.

You look at last year, didn't matter how good of a year you had, you got double points in the last race. You can swing 80, 90 points the wrong way, so...

I mean, I don't know. Let's wait and see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Juan.

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined now by the runner-up in today's race, Conor Daly.

Conor, pretty happy day.

CONOR DALY: Yes, I am a happy human. I mean, yeah, Dale Coyne Racing puts me in positions far greater than I deserve at times. Gosh, they do all the right things strategically.

Dale is a wizard, I think. He's up there calculating everything in his head. Maybe he can see the future, I don't know. But it was awesome.

The car was good, though, too. This morning we were seventh in the warmup. Yesterday we had problems in

qualifying. We haven't been able to show our potential in the car. To finally run up front, not get gobbled up by the guys around us, sort of proved we had the pace as well. That was a nice thing, as well.

THE MODERATOR: You were one of the cars to come in early to pit. How did that affect your race? Take us through your race from there.

CONOR DALY: I think no one really knew how long the reds were going to last or not. When everyone started pitting early, our tires were still sort of okay. We jumped a few positions when we came out of the pits after our first stop. But I lost them because the tires were cold. The blacks are different. I lost a couple positions, ended up right where we started, sort of behind Bourdais. I followed Bourdais the whole race, random times. I guess that strategy worked. That was good.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the last pit stop that got you back out there in second place.

CONOR DALY: I think the black tires were fantastic. We just kept going quicker and quicker every lap. It was really impressive. As the fuel went down, we kept getting rewarded with lap time. We were just pushing as hard as we could. I thought, Why change tires? They were still fine.

Sure enough, that was the right call. We're all happy campers.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Do you think the key for you and the winner was hot tires, short fuel? A lot of guys that put on slicks got out there and started sliding around. How big of a bold move was that for your team and Bourdais' team?

CONOR DALY: That last restart when we restarted like sixth or something, I have no idea where we were, but I know Bourdais was right in front of me, Spencer Pigot was in the mix. That was chaotic. The tires felt like they had no grip. As soon as they cooled down, the grip went away in a massive fashion.

I was arms and elbows behind Spencer, then finally got by him. We lost such a massive gap. That really killed us or took away a chance to fight for the win.

But, yeah, once the tires got hot, it was all about keeping them hot. I learned that in Europe. When it started raining once at the Nurburgring, we all finished the race on slick tires.

It was all about keeping them hot. As long as you kept them hot, you didn't have to pit, you could stay out. It

was raining the whole time. There was water coming down. You could see it on the visor. Tire heat was of maximum importance.

Q. This has been a year dominated by the big teams. You come to Detroit and two of the smaller teams are 1-2. There's a history of that in Detroit. Is there something about this course that levels the playing field for the teams?

CONOR DALY: I don't know, but that's a really good point. I mean, yeah, Bourdais won here last year, right? I finished sixth here last year. It seems to be one of those interesting places to throw some crazy strategies in the mix.

I like that stuff. We were all over the place. We were front-to-back, back-to-front today. That's what I love about IndyCar racing: I feel like anywhere you are, you're never out of the fight.

Q. You obviously have been on a rollercoaster ride the last few years trying to make it in IndyCar. To actually be on the podium, come in conditions you thrive in, what is the feeling?

CONOR DALY: I just hope I can stay around for a few years, for many years. I mean, it's taken so long to get to this point. Dale was the guy. Jonathan and David Byrd. They got together with Dale to put this program together for me. Sure enough, I have a job. That's a lot of fun. It's a fun job.

It's really, really difficult. This series is the most competitive series in the world. Everyone, we're fighting for just the smallest amounts of time. That's why it's been frustrating.

I have to continue to remember this is my first year, right? Everything has been all over the place up until this. To be on the podium my first year, it's a really rewarding experience. I just hope I can do more obviously.

Now the goal is to continue to try and stay consistent. Indy is the only non-finish we've had so far this year. I just hope to continue that.

Q. You had about a 20-second gap on Bourdais when you came to pit road. Did you allow yourself to entertain the possibility of beating him out?

CONOR DALY: Yes. To be honest, though, I didn't even know I was in the lead. I didn't know what was going on. All I was told is just, Push as hard as you can. That's what I was trying to do.

They said I'd be fighting with the 11 car on pit exit. I was. It's just he got me. We just missed it by about a second.

Yeah, I mean, heck, it's still great to be in the fight. Then he came back to us in traffic. There was some lap traffic there, we got right behind him. I think our tires then were a little bit gone.

Q. On lap 35, Penske was one through four.

CONOR DALY: That's not surprising.

Q. On lap 70, the guy that dominated the race is in 13th. How does the finish show how important strategy is?

CONOR DALY: I think that's what's so good about IndyCar racing. That's what they say, you're never out of the fight. As long as you got all four wheels and your wings, you're in. That's the coolest thing for me.

We've had days where we've started every race at the back, like way at the back. Here we are, we've had a sixth place at the last road course, now we got second. I mean, we've got to work on our qualifying performance, for sure. That's our biggest downfall right now.

But we're having some pretty decent races. It's been fun in race conditions. I just like the fact that anyone's got a shot here.

Q. This is your first podium finish in the Verizon IndyCar Series. When is the last time you finished on the podium?

CONOR DALY: Last year in the sports car series.

Q. What about open-wheel?

CONOR DALY: Would have been GP3 in 2013.

Q. Talk a little bit about how your physical condition is. Do you have blisters on your hands? Are you sore all over? How are you going to tackle the race tomorrow?

CONOR DALY: Well, I think I'm going to have a nice few waters tonight, sleep. I mean, it was tough. It was wet last year. So it wasn't quite as physically demanding. I was, All right, this shouldn't be too bad today.

Halfway through the race, this place is so rough, even though you have like two long straights, even three, it is so bumpy that you're constantly gripping the wheel for life. It's so bumpy.

Even though you have that long back straight, and the only smooth straight is down to turn three, but you're always on it. That's what I realize. This place is actually just hard because you're constantly gripping, constantly something's moving.

It's tough. But, I mean, we know there's a race tomorrow. We got to go back to work.

Q. I think it was yesterday that some of the drivers would put their hand out and hold it there. I thought it was like they were airing their gloves. Do you think it was because their hands were cramping?

CONOR DALY: I wouldn't have thought that in practice. Sometimes air to the hands is nice. I do that under caution as well. I was just thankful that my drink bottle worked today. We've had like all the races where it hasn't worked.

Q. It's such a strategic sport. You start with a strategy that's built upon data. At the end of the day you end with whatever you end with. How did it change from when you started and the end of the race to get you where you got?

CONOR DALY: That's up to the guys in the stand. I'm waiting to have a conversation with them about how we ended up where we did. There was a whole stint where I had to save an astronomical amount of fuel. I wasn't saving enough. We were going slow. I was like, Man, I don't know how this is going to work out for us.

But the yellows just fell the right way, I guess, for us. From what it looked like, on that last restart, we sort of ended up in the right place. I don't really know how yet. I'll still have to watch the race to figure out what happened.

But, yeah, I mean, the goal is also, what we thought at the time, to stay out for the last restart because if it rained, we'd be the first ones to get in the pits to get rain tires. That was the philosophy behind that as well. That's what they told me, at least.

Q. You filled in for Hinch last year. He was one of the first people up to you. What did he say to you?

CONOR DALY: He said, It's time to celebrate. I mean, that guy had a rough day. To still come up, he looked happy, looked like he finished right ahead of me or right behind me. That's why he's a good dude. Everyone loves Hinch. He's the man.

He has helped me so much. He always tells me, When you're on the podium, we'll be able to do this. It's not if, it's like, When you win, when you get on the podium.

I appreciate that. As a competitor, he's good at this game we're playing. For him to say that, it means a lot for me.

Q. This was one of the races you subbed in for last year. How valuable was that experience today?

CONOR DALY: It actually wasn't as valuable as we

thought because it was wet so much. Yeah, I mean, this was the first time we were like fully going after it in the dry. It was definitely a way different race last year.

But I enjoyed them both. I really enjoyed the wet here, too.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

CONOR DALY: Thanks.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome the winner of the race, Sebastien Bourdais.

Sebastien, take us through your day.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I'm not sure I know the scenario actually because I think I missed a couple of steps how we got from 13th to 16th to 18th to last pretty much, 13th again, then jumping into the lead. It was a rather interesting day and a great team effort from the 11 crew, Hydroxycut. To do that for Chevrolet here means a heck of a lot.

I'm not quite sure. Honestly the key was to try and get some clean air. I managed to do that at some point when we topped off and we had that six laps extra or something like that. That really was the key for our race, to actually be able to produce some fast laps, not be stuck in traffic constantly. If you're following the train in front of you, I just doesn't work.

That beat us at the beginning a little bit. A lot of us had the same idea of pitting early and getting rid of the reds. That really didn't get us anywhere because basically all three cars in front of me did, and a couple of guys behind us jumped us because they did it a couple laps later, minus the out lap.

Man, after that, I was like, We're done. Not only did we not make headway, but we lost position. How are we going to make that work?

When the yellow came out soon after, we came in and topped up. That really was the key moment for us. From that moment onwards, every time we were a little bit out of sync and could produce fast laps when the guys were coming out of the pits. I could run pretty quick with the Firestone black tires. I was very happy with the car.

Just not being stuck in traffic made the difference. Towards the end there, it was very dicey, a bit of a drizzle, then a lot of fights coming off the pits, whether I was coming off the pits or the guys were coming off the pits. There was a lot of close wheel-to-wheel action. We came out on top and we couldn't be any happier.

THE MODERATOR: Your 35th career win, ties you with Bobby Unser for sixth all time. How does that make you feel?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Stats are one thing. Every time you move up the ranks like this, you feel like you belong even more in a very elite group, a very small group of extremely talented drivers, some obviously who are legends.

I don't know that I want to compare myself to any of those. We've had such a rough winter. It has been such an uphill battle since the beginning of the season. To be able to come out on top today, it means a lot for the whole organization. We've been able to put on some pretty stellar performances in the last two or three years. We won a race, at least one, for the last two years. We were really looking forward to building that program. Then we had massive setbacks over the winter that really took the whole tree down.

We're still trying to recover. I'm just glad that all the guys that joined us so late in the game just get the reward for coming onboard and helping us out and making it happen. We've got a lot of real race fanatics, who some of them thought about retiring, came out, made it happen. We don't have the youngest crew of guys, but they got their hearts in it.

My engineer obviously stuck with me since I arrived at KVSH. All in all, it's him, Josh, our two engineers and two mechanics that stayed over the winter. It takes time to rebuild a team. It's really showed.

Today we put on our best game and came back on top. So that's pretty special.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it for questions.

Q. Those who put on slicks were getting squirrely out there. How important was it when you left the pits to keep those tires hot?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I think it was pretty crucial. I was still pretty worried because after I think the last yellow, I could not switch the tires back, between the drizzle and dicey at the start. We got basically going back to green, we were coming out of 11, which we kind of need to talk about that with race control because that's just way too late.

I'm just glad it worked out. I was crashing every corner for about three or four laps. The fact that you keep them clean, the tires, put any heat in the brakes before the restart, that almost did it pretty big. I think Conor was hurting just as bad as we were.

They all checked up at the front -- checked out, sorry. I could see Dixie and Graham and Juan just taking off. I

was like, Man, this is bad. This is when we need to close the gap and be able to stay with them.

For sure when we came in the pits, there was no discussion about it. They proposed to stay on the hot tires. I was onboard because I had very little degradation. The drizzle was on and off. It was going to be tough for us to get the heat back in the tires.

Q. Quick turnaround. Success is going to be short to celebrate. You have to be back in the car early in the morning to qualify for another race. What is that like for you to mentally get ready for another race?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Thankfully it's not my first rodeo, not the first win. This one is special, it means a lot for everybody. But I think we're all professionals. We know we got more to do. I believe we can put on a good performance again tomorrow and start from higher up.

It doesn't always work your way back from where we were, especially where we ended up at some point trying to play the game to do something else. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I think all the guys have their heads in the game. They're going to be even more motivated. I'm not too worried about that.

Q. Everything comes down to fractions of seconds. Is there one thing that you did during the race that you can point to that made the difference for you to win?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I think, honestly, the car was getting quicker and quicker. It's like the more I was pushing the car, the more I was getting out of it with these Firestone tires. Very often (indiscernible) happens that way on concrete tracks. To be not overdriving was the key. As soon as you were putting a wheel off the line or passing someone, it was taking a long time to clean the tires and get back up there. I think that was really the key.

Also we had some really good in-and-out laps. Like I said, if I had given up a couple positions, the fights I had wheel-to-wheel coming out of the pits, merging with traffic coming out of the pits, it always played in our favor. These are crucial moments. If you don't get the upper hand on that one, it's so tough to pass. I was on the low side on 'push to pass'. It's not like I could keep on trying. When I had to make a pass, I had to make it stick.

It's funny, man. Sometimes things work out and you can't point out one thing that worked out. As a whole for the race it goes your way somehow. The common denominator is a quick car and I think we had that

today.

Q. At one point today Penske was running one through four.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I didn't see that.

Q. How difficult is it to beat that team? How satisfying is it when you do it?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I wish we could say we beat them fair and square today. But obviously strategy played quite a bit into it. With this pits closed rule, that's why nobody can go on winning six, seven, eight races like it happened to me back in the Champ Car days. It just throws the races up in the air. It's for anybody to grab it.

I guess they're clearly the class of the field on the street courses this year. I think they've been beatable in some other places, but on street courses, they just got the stuff figured out. It's been very tough.

Let's face it. This has not been the place where we've been the strongest. We've had a terrible '14, couldn't get the car to work. I was almost spinning every 15 laps. Not only I couldn't get pace, but I was getting pickup on the tires. We had to change tires to get rid of vibration. It was just horrible.

We came back last year with a different setup, made some gains, but obviously never really could see if it was that good because it was always raining, this and that.

Then this year we tried to make improvements. It seemed like it was working on blacks, but then it didn't work on reds. So we're still searching our way. Clearly they got a car that works on both. Definitely beatable. But it's a matter of time, resources and smart guys, a lot of them, at the wheel, and some really good drivers.

When you have a (indiscernible) like they have, it's tough to come out on top with such a small organization on our side.

For sure, when you do, it's awfully satisfying because you know you just beat the best in the business. I think when you look at the fastest laps, we're not in there by any means. I've been on that side of the fence where I've been in cars that were expected to win. I can tell you for sure, when you do win in a car that's not necessarily the top of the class, it's very, very gratifying.

Q. Seems to be something about Detroit that gives the smaller teams a chance. Dale Coyne has won here before. Is there something that levels the playing field about this course?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I don't know. When you look at it, this year really, like, he was saying, this should have been Penske, one, two, three, four. It just seems like they get even stronger while everybody is just trying to scramble the pieces. Sometimes we get it right, but not all the time.

But I think what tends to be a little bit different here than most places is that there's definitely been more yellows than almost any of the races so far, except St. Pete maybe. That's what throws the race up in the air. Again, because of the closed pits, leaders get screwed pretty often. It definitely didn't help them today.

Q. Do you think being a smaller team gives you an advantage over the bigger teams in that you have experienced engineers, it's just yourself working with them?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, there is no advantage there. Thankfully Olivier and I work together really well, we're countrymen. But we definitely could use more resources, more time, more money, more people. If you knew how many things we leave unturned, it's very frustrating at times.

Like at Indy, the car, we didn't have time to get the car to a shaker rig because we ran three cars, then all of a sudden time has gone by and we don't have enough people to build the car, don't have the crew to go test and do things. It's the limitations of the small teams.

It's also what makes it so sweet when it does happen.

Q. It gives you a bit of satisfaction.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: It's extra special when you go and beat these guys. Obviously today wasn't the perfect display because we didn't go and beat them fair and square. When you win, for example, like we did last year at Milwaukee, you blow by the field, that is very special.

Q. Contrast this to the race you won last year. Only two cautions today. How much different was this?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: The big difference is the cautions obviously fell at the right time for us, put us back in the game. The first one, not so much. It turned out to be instrumental in how the race was going to unfold later on.

When you look at the chart, who pitted, who didn't, fuel-wise, that's how you realize, Man, I'm glad we did take that one.

It's always a gamble for the future. It's like playing poker. You know what hand you have right now at the moment, but every bet you make is going to work or not work based on what's going to happen later on.

You just have to make decisions.

Today we just got the lucky hand. The guys in the pits made the right call. Thankfully I didn't make any mistakes, ran pretty well and pretty strong.

Last year was very strange because once we got to the front, 20 laps to go, we were seven laps short. Oh, boy, that's a longshot. In the meantime, if we're going to pit, we're going to give up all this track position. Everybody but five cars were in the same strategy. Worst-case scenario, we're going to be fifth. I'll take it. We'll go for a win. If it works out, it works out.

But last year was very tough, one restart after another. The reason we did it is because there was that one lane dry. Restarts in these conditions, with everybody on slicks, you have one lane, it's wet everywhere, the probability for it to go yellow again very soon is pretty high. That's why we went for it.

You still have to hold everybody off, not get hit, go through. That was a train wreck, that's for sure. Mentally it's always exhausting because you have Montoya, very experienced guys, sneaky guys behind you. You know they're not going to make it easy on you. Again, it was pretty satisfying.

Q. (No microphone.)

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Actually to be honest with you, I'm not the strongest in the paddock. I'm not playing Hulk around there, running a crazy amount of castor to make the steering just impossible to turn. It's a personal preference. I never have run very much castor in my career because I lose the feel of the car. Some guys do, but they find a benefit to it.

It was heavy enough towards the end. Sparco made some really big gains on the gloves. I tend not to blister up too much any more. Definitely come back sometimes with pretty bloody hands, which is not good, especially when you have to run the second race the next day.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Sebastien.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Thank you.