

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday June 10, 2016

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our media availability. Pleased to welcome four-time Verizon IndyCar Series champion Scott Dixon.

Scott, you were second in practice. Talk us through the session, how was it out there?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was pretty good. We had quite a few issues right out of the box. We did the install and then couldn't get the car to start afterwards. We seemed to have some electronic failure with the direct injection boxes which took us out for 25, 30 minutes trying to diagnose what that was. Then we did a couple qual stints. Second one both Tony and I got pretty big tows.

Hard to tell where we really stack up. Looks like it's going to be really tight at the front. Hopefully we have a car that can be in the top six or seven for qualifying. But it's going to be a few hundredths between the first lap and then to see how the falloff is going to be for the second lap at speed. (Indiscernible.)

The car feels okay. I think with the changes from last year, it's making it a little bit more challenging mechanically, having to run more downforce. I think with what the Verizon IndyCar Series has allowed with the package, how much adjustment you can have, we feel for the Chevy teams, it seems like it's going to be a pretty good race as far as being tighter than last year's.

THE MODERATOR: (Indiscernible.)

SCOTT DIXON: Big emphasis on the 30 minutes. Be nice if they could extend that to an hour. It would be good. I think the 30-minute session, we'll definitely be trying.

I think the car was okay, we just didn't do a very good job at hitting the balance very well. I think mechanically we're fairly close. Hopefully tonight, once we do the final practice, the car's a little closer.

Yeah, we'll need all of the 30 minutes or more if we can.

THE MODERATOR: Halfway point of the season. You're in second place in the standings, 80 points

behind Simon Pagenaud. (Indiscernible.)

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, second in points sounds good, but not when Pagenaud has an 80-point lead. With so much of the season to go, that can flip pretty quickly. If he has one bad race, and myself or four or five that are really close around that second place, can jump up pretty quickly.

I think we've all got to keep our heads down and definitely make a race of the championship. By all means, it's halfway, so there's a lot of points left on the table. Hopefully we can swing it here quickly.

We've had some good runs this year. I think the car's had great speed, but we've had a lot of problems that really maybe have taken some variable points we should have capitalized on.

That's how it goes. It's racing. Really have to work for it. No different than any other year. You really have to put your head down and make the most of it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Scott.

Q. It's the fifth weekend in a row you've been on track. In that time you've had a week of practice at Indianapolis, a doubleheader at Detroit, now you have a test at Watkins Glen and Elkhart Lake. Can you comment on how difficult this has been for you, the engineers, the drivers?

SCOTT DIXON: For the driver, a doubleheader is pretty physical. Indianapolis I think was pretty crazy this year, with the other tests we had going on around. The drivers saw the appearances go through the roof, which was fantastic for the hundredth running and all those things.

The crew, through the month of May, they only had three days off, then you go straight into a doubleheader, then straight here. Some of us go straight to Le Mans after Saturday night over there as well. Teams are testing I think at Road America on Wednesday. We get back Sunday night from Le Mans, test Monday at Watkins Glen.

The series I think needs to reevaluate the in-season testing just because we are so compressed during the year. Maybe if they open that up to a couple years

back where we didn't have any in-season testing, we used the days outside, that will open up the seven-day blackout at tracks, run the week off, so you're actually in the same place, same facility. I'm sure there's a logical way to do it.

Yeah, it's grueling right now for the teams. Huge credit obviously goes to the mechanics and engineers and everybody working. Three- or four-month stretches, pretty relentless on them.

Q. What is the racing going to be like with the dome skid? Is it going to be close or like we've seen the last couple of years where cars kind of come on strong and fade over the tire run?

SCOTT DIXON: I think there's still going to be a good amount of degradation. But that's good for racing. I think last year had all the components to make it a really close race. It was just kind of shocking that really only three or four cars chose to run the downforce that we did, which made the cars very consistent and good on the long runs, whereas the rest of the field were quite trim and were dropping like flies sort of halfway through a stint.

I think last year had most of the field ran downforce similar to what we did, it would have been a close race. I think with what happened last year, I think you're going to see a lot of teams run similar downforce and pile it on.

The dome skid is one thing. I think you have to give the safety steam and everyone at IndyCar huge credit. At Indianapolis, with crashes, there were no cars coming off the ground with the rear flap and the dome skid. That was huge for everybody involved and great to see. Big credit to them.

It does affect the mechanical balance. You get a little more washout because it seems to float the front a little bit more. They've given us the required amounts we've asked for, as far as strakes, underwing stuff. We have a wide range of other bits you can put on the car. It's just at what lack of speed you want to take those things out.

If you can be finishing a run at 206 instead of in the 190s, but only going 210, it's probably going to be the best bet.

I think, in short, the race should be closer. It's just what the teams choose to run.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT DIXON: We did last year. That definitely worked out well.

I think last year, if there was a late caution, even with a

stint or two to go, you have to remember last year we only had one caution, which was before halfway. Had we had a caution or two with 60 to go, it would have been a pretty tough race.

Q. What about tires? I know you have a different compound. How does that feel so far?

SCOTT DIXON: It's kind of hard to tell because there's so many variables. The body tips have changed, dome skid has affected the car a lot. I think Firestone have made a small change. But at the test I think it was more noticeable the other things that had changed on the car as opposed to the tires.

As I said, I think the degradation they give us is very good for racing, the drivers and teams having to figure out how to preserve the tire better. I think it's just so hard when you can potentially run 212 or 214, then you pile on a bunch of downforce, you can only run 207, nobody wants to run that. But on the long run, it's going to be a huge amount better for you. You're going to slow down three or four miles an hour instead of nine or ten.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT DIXON: Drop pretty heavily, yeah.

Q. What's the situation as far as trying all the different lanes?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it would definitely open up. This morning, it's hard because some were doing qual sim, some did it at the start of the session, some did it at the end. For at least myself, lane two and three, we didn't have a neutral enough car to run up there, a lot of understeer. As the race goes on, I know lane two becomes almost like the preferred lane, then three gets used a lot more.

Right now, especially in turn two, kind of just a bit before turn two, the bumps are pretty bad there. With the dome skid and the titanium plates, it hits the bottom, hits a lot harder and moves your car around. That's the same in the exit of four. Those are areas that everybody is being a little cautious about. When it comes down to the race, man, you'll have everybody using every lane possible, I think.

I don't know. I haven't tried the third or fourth yet. Hope to get there tonight.

THE MODERATOR: You'll be making your 200th consecutive start Saturday, ranking third on the all-time consecutive starts. You're an Ironman.

SCOTT DIXON: Probably a hundred short of T.K.

THE MODERATOR: He'll be at 257.

SCOTT DIXON: He's through the roof.

Obviously I just love racing. It's a lot of fun. Obviously with a team like this, we've had a lot of success. For us, we just hope it continues. Yeah, it's been a run and hopefully we can do another 200 consecutive.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned you loved racing. Immediately after the race on Saturday night you head to Le Mans. Talk about what it means to you to be part of that program, 50 years after your fellow countrymen won it.

SCOTT DIXON: If you look at it as a whole, in combination with the same team, a lot of guys that have worked on the IndyCar program that I've worked on the IMSA program. The transition makes it a lot easier.

I haven't been there before. I don't know. Everybody I'm sure has watched the 24 Hours of Le Mans. It's an amazing event. Looks like a European version of the Indy 500, the support it has over there.

I don't know. A lot of eyes wide open taking in the experience. I wish the calendar wasn't so tight. I think we fly right over here, get there about 4 p.m. on Sunday. I was hoping they were going to move that to Monday so we at least had a day off.

Can't wait to get on track. The weather looks a bit iffy right now. But I can't wait for the experience, it will be so cool.

As you mentioned, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the '66 win for the Ford GT, for (indiscernible), driving that car. The whole point is to go there and see if we can replicate that win 50 years later.

Q. What are you expecting from the test at Watkins Glen? How do you think this car is going to react to the track having not been there for a few years now?

SCOTT DIXON: It's hard to know. Watkins Glen just went through a resealing or repave. I expect it to be as fast as hell. It's going to be extremely fast.

But the cool thing with the Glen, you can trim out some, too, with the uphill climb to the back straight and the bus stop. There's definitely some different configurations that you can run as far as aero. The first test is only a partial day. We run in the afternoon. Then we go back for an open test later on.

For the most part it's a tire test to figure out a few things there. But, yeah, really excited to get back to the Glen. Obviously a favorite of mine. The goal is to obviously have a great day testing and go back and try

to contend for a race win.

Q. Touching back on Le Mans, can you talk about some advice that Bourdais has given you? How did everything get started for you?

SCOTT DIXON: Bourdais and myself have worked together at some of the other races. I wasn't part of the 24 Hour program when we were still in the prototype, then the 12 Hour. I think there was so much going on with the program, we had many more things to talk about coming up to Le Mans.

I'll have an eight-hour flight from here to catch up on some of the tricks. Being a hometown person living right down the road, I think he's got a house right in Le Mans, hopefully he can point me in the right direction for good restaurants. He can be my translator, too. I was hoping to bring Poppy and Tilly because they are in French immersion and they speak fluently in French, but they can't make the trip unfortunately.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's been really easy. We're in different cars, so the debriefs have been somewhat separate. He's very accomplished, has run there before. I definitely will be asking him a lot of questions when it comes down to it.

Yeah, I think because we're on such a steep learning curve with that program right now, and for myself going there for the first time, it's going to be pretty interesting. I've only done a simulator test. Haven't been on the track or seen it. Excited to get out there.

Yeah, it was cool how it all came together for myself. Obviously was asking a lot about that program when I first heard rumors about it, obviously chatted to Chip to see if we could make something possible.

A lot of the problem is trying to get schedules to work. That's the toughest thing. Then rules of how you can comply, whether you're able to compete in the race without doing the open test.

Q. Back to Texas. You talked about getting the balance of the car right, the strakes and the sidewalls. From the downforce that's created by the underside of the car, can the teams adjust that to increase that downforce or is it just the adjustments coming from the top part? What about turbulence following the other drivers?

SCOTT DIXON: The underwing is controlled by IndyCar pretty much. You can only run the pieces that they allow us to. There's no negotiation there. I don't know the Honda kit that well. But with the Chevy, there's a lot of combinations, even from qualifying to race trim. You're changing side pods, winglets. You

have road course winglets and speedway winglets.
There's a ton of stuff you can change.

From our point of view it's tough to figure out the right configuration because there are so many options and we get so little time to test under these conditions.

Turbulence? It's pretty similar. I wouldn't say it's any worse. I think it's logical to think when there's more stuff on top of the car, the turbulence gets worse, and it does. But it's not critical.

Q. Were you able to meet with any of the stewards today about your concerns over the contact you experienced at Detroit last Sunday?

SCOTT DIXON: No, I haven't yet. Exchanged a few text messages on that. We're meant to meet up sometime today. I was just talking to Kanaan, referring to a couple of those incidents on the weekend.

Yeah, I don't know, I think it's something that we need to talk about because, one, there was no penalty, and the other one was an obscure penalty of reversing a position with someone that wasn't even in the incident. I don't know what to tell you on that.

Q. Not only is it the halfway point of the season, but after tomorrow night there will only be two more oval races left. Seems like we just got started on the ovals. Do you think that's a weak link on the schedule? If so, where would you like to go?

SCOTT DIXON: I think big picture you got to go to places you're well-received. Right now I think IndyCar is in a very good position. I think we have a good balance right now.

I always like the 50/50 split of 50% road course, street, and 50% ovals, whatever combination it is.

I'd say right now personally I think we're too light on ovals and we need to look into places that are going to work. I think Richmond would be good. Kentucky was always fun. Kansas was a decent place.

Right now you definitely got to put a lot of time and effort in picking places, promoting them well, making sure they run strong out of the box.

I know there's some areas we need to improve. But first you got to make sure you go to the right places.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, thank you for your time.
Good luck today.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.