

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday July 9, 2016

Marco Andretti Alexander Rossi Ryan Hunter-Reay Carlos Munoz

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please to be joined by all four drivers Andretti Autosport. The team itself has won the last six Verizon IndyCar Series races in a row here at Iowa Speedway, and also seven of nine races in total.

Marco, in addition to being one of the sites for your Verizon IndyCar Series win, you've qualified fairly consistently here. What can we look forward to in qualifying later on this afternoon?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I'm not sure actually. Yeah, two of us came off a spin, so that's probably the last thing I want to do right now is go out and hold it wide open, but we're going to try it, see what we get.

Yeah, I don't know. I mean, we'll have to see. It's a bit frustrating from our standpoint right now with top nine locked up, and so we just need to try to not get too greedy and chasing them and end up worse. So we just need to maximize I think what we have, and if we can do that, maybe we can start in the Top-10, which you can win from there.

THE MODERATOR: Carlos, this season, and also in the past, you've shown a lot of speed on ovals. In your opinion, what are you looking for this weekend at Iowa Speedway?

CARLOS MUNOZ: Yeah, for sure, Iowa is completely different from all the tracks. Last year, compared to my first year here in Iowa, I was much better. I finished fifth. I think it has been a really good track for Andretti Autosports over the past few years.

Practice wasn't so good as we expect. We expected a little bit better. But you saw last year, we didn't qualify well, the whole group. Like last time in the race, Ryan won and we were third and fifth.

So here the race, it's a long race. For sure this is going



to be totally different from last year because we have less downforce. It's during the day, the race, we won't have the night race, you have more downforce. Qualifying stop is next, you have a good qualifying, not overdo it like I did in Phoenix, trying to chase the other cars and I end up on the wall. It's not our goal in qualifying. It's just to have good qualifying in our capacities, so we'll see what happens tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, you've been a big part of Andretti Autosport success here at Iowa, including the last two race wins, three wins in total. Knowing that you had such success here, does that change your approach coming into the weekend?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Not really. I mean, you take your experiences and you put them to use every year. We work as a team together to put the best car on track on Sunday, or Saturday night, or whatever it may be.

No, it doesn't really change my mentality at all. Every year I have to come back and work just as hard to get it done. Seems like it gets harder and harder every year, actually.

Certainly going to miss the night racing here. I think this place is great for night racing. It's one of those tracks that we always love coming to to have a nice race at. So hopefully we'll have a good race on Sunday. Track temps are going to be up. The forecast says maybe ambient in the 90s, so we'll see. It's going to be new for just about everybody, and we still have a lot of work to do this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: And Alexander, this is your first race here at Iowa Speedway but I'm sure it helps knowing you have a team around you that has had so much success here. What have they been able to provide you that's given you some comfort coming into the weekend?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's not just specifically here. Every track that I go to, it's a huge team effort from all of our parts, and that's been a huge thing that's helped me get up to speed. I think we all look back on the season so far and think that things could have gone better.

But as a group, we just take it one week at a time and try to push the whole team forward every single session. I think that's one of the incredibly strong things about this team and hopefully it will pay off again for everyone this weekend.

Q. With Ryan winning the last two, how tough is that going to be to kind of live up to your own standards that the team has set?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's going to be incredibly tough. It's tough every year we come back. The 28 has had win, Marco has had wins, I've had a win here; James and Tony. It's tough to come back and defend it every year.

Like I said, it seems like it gets tougher and tougher each year. In practice here last year, we were maybe T-10 at best and we turned that around in the race. That's the beautiful thing about the Verizon IndyCar Series, you never know who is going to have a shot at it at the end.

It's something we just have to keep working hard on it. At the moment, we're working on qualifying but later on today it's going to be focusing on race trim and working in race traffic. The target is always moving.

Q. Alex, after Phoenix, your win in Indianapolis, and now here in Iowa, do you think you have a pretty good understanding how ovals are working or are you still learning?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, I'm learning for sure. You know, things are better than Phoenix for sure. I think I felt really a little bit out of depth in Phoenix through the whole experience. I think by the end of the race, I was feeling better.

And then having a month around Indianapolis obviously does a lot. I feel a lot better but still, there's areas where I'm pretty uncomfortable still and working on that and rely on these guys next to me to help explain things a little bit.

Q. With how the weather was at the test, were you able to take enough away from that set up-wise, handling-wise that's going to apply this weekend.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think we were best able to take a direction from it. You can't really take it -- the conditions are completely different now, relatively speaking. For us, they are completely different. You know, the casual fans would think they are very similar, but you have gone up maybe eight degrees and the track temp has gone up because in the test it was cloudier. These things affect our grip level and that's what we're working on all the time, being on the edge at time and stepping over the edge at times.

Q. How have you made the adjustment to Indy from Formula One?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's been a process for sure. I think the biggest difference, once I tried to -- or have gotten used to the car, has been the tracks. I only know three of the tracks we are going to this year. The first one was Road America. So I'm very much looking forward to Mid-Ohio and Sonoma, just from knowing where the place runs and kind of how it runs and stuff. It's a big adaptation process on a lot of different levels but doing our best.

Q. What do you think it's going to take to get that seventh consecutive win here at Iowa tomorrow night?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I think just adapting. As Ryan said, it's been a moving target, and this year, there's definitely some changes. Turn one is smoother, and now three and four, they have added some bumps there.

So some things have changed, and obviously it's a day race and he touched on that, as well. The track temp really affects these cars and the grip level. We just need to adapt and really stay with it and just try to get a good car tonight. We need a good starting position, which the 27 has not been strong in that aspect this year. I've made my Sundays pretty miserable.

So that will be the goal, at least from my standpoint, to get as good track position as we can for the start. With the short lap here, you can get down a lap pretty easy.

If we have a good car tonight, we can go forward, I think it's going to come down to handling, for sure. We'll see where the degradation goes when everybody is out there and stays out there and they can't work on their cars. If you miss a little bit here, I think you're going to be way off.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think Marco hit on it. The real puzzle is going to be the patches in three, four, that are new this year. That's different for us. It's made it a different track in many ways. So we'll see. Everybody is going to be pretty good down there on new rubber. It's who's good overall on a whole stint on tires, because the grip level certainly decreases fast.

Q. Is that a product of the tires --

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, it's a product of the patches.

Q. Could you address the fact it's going to be warm tomorrow, maybe 90 degrees; how does that affect the car on the track, do you slide more? Maybe something you don't want on an oval.

CARLOS MUNOZ: For sure, last year, the kind of

numbers, you pick up a lot of downforce, like 70 pound of downforce, just from the conditions. Last year was a little bit colder than going to be tomorrow, but you have to adapt to it.

Also for the league, we have a minimum level downforce than last year, so also that makes even more hard than last year because of the loads we had last year was really heavy. So for sure it's going to be completely different this year. Normally you start the race and you know how the car is going to be.

This year, I think the car is going to be really constant all through the race. So you have to be a little bit more aggressive with the car than what you're used to. But you know, it's the same condition for everyone, so you have to just adapt to it and see how the tire goes.

It's totally different when practice and when you run 60 laps continuously with traffic with full fuel. Tires is way different. Last year, like Ryan said, we were like tenth, 12th in practice, and in the race we finished first, fifth; we moved forward in the race. It's hard to know how good you're going to be until you're in the race.

Q. You mentioned, I think Marco mentioned about the patches in turns three and four and I understand they removed the bumps, or helped remove part of the bump in turn one. Can you talk about how that upset the car and what's going to happen over the tire stint in terms of if there are slippery patches, what happens when you're tires start wearing out?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's tough to say. Everybody's car is set up differently. So far the majority of the people I've talked to, seems like once you get over the patches, it's not necessarily the hit. It's not the bump. In three and four, it's the patch; once you get over it, it almost feels like from a driver's perspective, it's the surface material, like the consistency of the surface, you feel like you're getting over almost like a concrete feeling. Like what we feel at Toronto when we get on little patches there and once you get over it, the car never really recovers totally. You're definitely pedaling it.

Now, there's always balance issues, right. You could dial in a whole bunch of understeer, a whole bunch of push, and you're not going to have that issue but you're not going to be very fast. So you're always trying to balance that.

Q. They are going with the Phoenix aero package, and I know that in Phoenix, Ryan, you really had a fast car, kind of got hosed in the fifth a couple of times there. Are you guys in favor of the Phoenix aero package, or do you feel that maybe it should

have been tweaked a little bit more for this track?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I mean, around a place like this, we came here and did aero testing with IndyCar with Dixon, tested a range of different downforce and all the loads were still the same through the cars, to minimize mechanical failures, it was the same all the way through.

I'm kind of the mind-set that you have got a race car, you set the downforce. If you set a whole lot of downforce, you're going to be slow, but you're going to be faster at the end. The guy that trims a bit is going to be quick but he's going to fall off at the end.

I like the idea of being able to choose and not having a league-mandated set point. And especially when you come to a place like this where we race at nice historically and we come back in the day and we are going to race in 92-degree weather, yeah, I think every team should be able to pick.

Now you go somewhere like Fontana or these big super speedways, then maybe we need to talk about downforce settings. You don't want everybody -- you don't want 15 cars on top of each other the entire stint through tires. That's not going to happen here.

Q. Saw a lot of you guys -- (off mic).

MARCO ANDRETTI: From a performance standpoint, I'm not a fan of it, like if you look at Chevrolet. You're not going to have a packed race here. In fact, it would be probably even better for the fans if we had a little more downforce, but especially now that it's during the day.

But it might create some more degradation and it puts more of an emphasis on getting things right. I think maybe the people who don't will go backwards and vice versa. So that might mix it up in itself.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: One more thing on that. Last year there were concerns about the loads and the steering weight from drivers. That was a night race, though, so we can't compare this to that; apples and oranges. That was my point.

Q. For this race tomorrow, we're using a Phoenix-type package. What I remember from that race is the leader couldn't pass the last guy in line when he caught up to lap the slowest car. Do you expect to see a similar race or do you think -- this is higher banked; Phoenix somewhat flat.

MARCO ANDRETTI: There's more room here and there's a second lane here, which seems to be preferred over three and four, nobody wants to go down the bumps. I think there's more room to get the pass done here. It really tightens up at the exit in one

at Phoenix, and sort of three and four, unless you're Rossi, you don't really want to be way outside of three and four.

I don't know, I think there's just more room here, so it should be better.

CARLOS MUNOZ: It's two lanes here, so it's much better to overtake, and also the degradation is much higher here than Phoenix, so more passing here for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much.