

Scott Dixon Kicks Off Baltimore Grand Prix IndyCar & ALMS Activities

By: Joe Jennings, IndyCar Correspondent



Joe Jennings/Motorsport.com Scott Dixon participates in Maryland's "Smooth Operator" campaign during media activities leading up to Baltimore Grand Prix

Baltimore, Md. – The Baltimore Orioles and the Baltimore Ravens dominate the sports scene in Baltimore but for this year's Labor Day weekend, the legendary teams will be sharing the spotlight with the IZOD IndyCar Series and the American Le Mans Series presented by Patron, which will race through the city streets on a newly constructed 2-mile, 13-turn temporary road circuit. The circuit will weave around the picturesque Inner Harbor and the popular Camden Yard ball field.

To assist with the kick-off activities, IndyCar Series champion Scott Dixon flew in, coming here directly from a hasty weekend trip to

Australia that followed an IndyCar Series test at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course.

Arriving in Baltimore at 2 a.m., Dixon was on duty by 7 a.m., starting off with a radio interview and other media obligations. In mid-morning, Dixon, BGP officials and local police representatives gathered at the Geppi Sports Legend Museum adjacent to Camden Yards to greet the media, discuss the upcoming race and introduce the 2011 Smooth Operator campaign, a program sponsored by the state of Maryland to promote safe-driving on the state's roadways.

Once the formal portion of the program ended, Dixon drove media members around the course, pointing out key areas of the track, including passing zones. He complimented track builders on providing a wide race surface along with low and high- speed corners and a number of passing zones.

Indianapolis 500 winner Al Unser Jr. worked with the race officials on designing the track and Dixon said he plans to compliment the New Mexico racer on a job well done.

"They have all done a nice job, giving us a mix of opportunities for passing," Dixon said. "The 90 degree turns will be a challenge and the medium to high-speed corners should be good ones. I think we should be able to hit 175 to 180 miles per hour on the longest straightaway (Pratt Street)."

According to Dixon, the IndyCar drivers will learn everything they can about the track when they walk around it prior to the start of the race weekend. "We will be able to see the curbs, the locations of the concrete barriers and the tire walls," he said.

Although Dixon thought an upfront starting position was desirable, he didn't think it essential, as he had already identified several passing zones not often found on street courses. He said the track bears a resemblance to the St. Petersburg layout. After spending the day in Baltimore, Dixon flew home to Indianapolis to be with his wife, Emma, and daughter, Poppy, while awaiting the birth of their second child in early October. Since Poppy arrived nearly four weeks early, the Dixon's realize their new daughter could arrive during the BGP weekend.

Preparations for the BGP have been underway for nearly two years and according to Jay Davidson, president and CEO of the Baltimore Grand Prix, the track build-out is ahead of schedule. With about 30 days to go, bleachers have been set up and the tire barriers and Jersey walls are being installed. Also, more than 80 hospitality suites have been sold and additional ones are anticipated. By comparison, Davidson said the St. Petersburg Grand Prix only sold 26 suites.

For the next four weeks, race officials believe the excitement will continue to build in Baltimore with the initial on-track action to start on September 2 with the ALMS race taking place in late afternoon on September 3 and the Baltimore Grand Prix will take the green flag on Sunday at 2:45 p.m. ET.⁴

In between the major races, the Firestone Indy Lights will compete along with the Star Mazda Championship Series and the USF2000 Series.