

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday, September 12, 2020
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Will Power

Team Penske

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We welcome our race winner, Will Power. Quite a big day today. Talk about what a great day it was.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was a really good day. It's kind of the first time we've done it this year where we just went hard and used the raw pace that I had to pull a gap and just pit on the early side. Normally we're saving fuel and tires. We just saw today, we should just go, nothing to lose; we're not in the championship. And it certainly worked out. Really over the moon to finally win at this track.

Q. Disappointed you're not in the ice bath?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I've been told not to do that.

THE MODERATOR: I asked him not to. I actually just took Liz back to the coach and told her to make sure he wasn't in ice bath.

Q. Obviously qualifying was a big part of today, but the two previous poles that you've had this year obviously had a lot of bad luck, so did it feel like a kind of monkey off the back today to get sort of everything going your way as it has done today?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it did. I'll tell you what, like if it had rained on the last lap or something like that -- obviously this year we've been in position to win a number of times, and it hasn't worked out for one reason or another. Just great execution by the team, and I think that we'll all click well now and start -- we're always knocking on the door for wins. We have the pace, we just didn't have the execution, but now it obviously all fell our way, so that was great.

Q. Obviously with those poles earlier in the year being so much down to bad fortune, is there anything you

can learn from going on a run now and putting stuff together towards the end of this season for next year, or is it just a case of you feel like you've been there and you've been close enough to having the results, it's just not quite gone your way?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we kind of just did -- like everyone did their job as they have been doing. We just had some abnormal mistakes, and obviously at Indy we just struggled in qualifying. That really was tough in the race because it was hard to pass.

It was just -- you have runs like that, and then you can have a run like Dixon had where he catches every yellow perfectly, and if you look at Newgarden it's gone the opposite; like every yellow has fallen for Scott and every yellow has fallen against Newgarden, and myself actually, because I've been with him. He would probably be leading the championship right now had that not been the case. Just shows how things can flow for you, and obviously it's coming around for us now.

THE MODERATOR: We have been joined by our second-place finisher today in the Honda of Mid-Ohio 200. Josef, talk about the one-two finish for Team Penske today.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was a great day. It was a good day to see Will Power is still Will Power. Happy for him. He put on a good clinic today. He was really fast and certainly was the deserving winner.

But it was nice to get a one-two, like you said. It was a great Team Penske day. Felt like we showed up with good cars, and Team Chevy has done a nice job for us here so far, and obviously just on our car specifically having PPG is nice at Mid-Ohio. This is a big race for them.

Yeah, pretty happy. I wish we could have been a little quicker. I felt like if I could have just been a couple tenths quicker I probably could have challenged Will a little better, but we've got to find that tonight, just got to figure out how to be that next step up. But yeah, a decent day for points. Could have been a little stronger, but we're not going to complain. It's at least a solid day that didn't have any strange hiccups.

Q. I don't want to say you were on the hot seat but

... when all is said, we're done.®



maybe the seat was a little lukewarm. What's it like to get that victory for this season out of the way and now you can kind of focus on racking up a few more for the rest of the season?

WILL POWER: Yeah, yeah, it's great. You know, if you ask Josef what I was saying before at the podium in St. Louis, it's quite a different story now, but he reminded me of that when he saw me after the race. You know, sometimes things don't flow for you and it's starting to click for us now. You know, just going to go out there and keep doing the same stuff. I mean, I've got very good guys on my car, obviously have a very good car and team, and just got to execute.

Yeah, you know, it's definitely not over for Josef in the championship. I really believe that he could catch Dixon if all circumstances play out, and it's definitely not over for us to be top 3, I think, if we had a really good finish. That's kind of as a team what we'd be aiming for, and I'm going to try to do my best to execute that.

Q. Will, you've had some seasons in the past where the first part of the year didn't go very well and then you end on a flourish. Could this be one of those years?

WILL POWER: Yeah, no, it seems like that. I never try to put it down to luck. There are reasons why things go wrong and you need to kind of analyze and fix that. And obviously, again, the start of our season just put us in a hole, and we're kind of getting together now, but I think it'll be good momentum going into next year. At some point it's going to go right for us as far as the beginning of the year and being in the actual points hunt.

Q. For Josef, to be able to take a nice chunk out of Dixon's lead, I guess you've got to take it one race at a time, but if you keep at it at this pace, we'll have a pretty good battle going into St. Pete.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, absolutely. We can't have a bad day tomorrow. I think what's been the case for us a lot this year is that we kind of take a step forward and then we take almost two steps backwards. That's really been the case most of the year, and we just end up slowly getting further and further away from Dixon.

But you know, if we have another good day tomorrow, then it'll be a real positive weekend, and we just need to have that again at the GP and then we'll see where we're at in St. Pete; maybe have a good challenge. Yeah, we just can't have any mistakes. Look, it's a big mountain for us to climb right now, and we've certainly used up all our bad luck for the year, so we don't really have much to give

away, but we're just going to keep our heads down, like Will said. We've got a good group and got to keep our heads down and try and make the most of it again tomorrow and try and close this year out as best as possible with Team Penske.

Q. How good of a mountain climber are you? Have you done that in your life?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I feel pretty good. It's just when people start aiming bazookas at the mountain and you can't really avoid the blasts, I don't think I can do anything about that.

WILL POWER: That's called a yellow, Josef.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Exactly, exactly, the yellow bazookas. I mean, look, if that doesn't happen, we're going to be just fine. Both of us can climb a mountain really well, so yeah, no odd things, I think we'll be okay.

Q. Will, I know both on the broadcast and here a couple minutes ago you said this was the first race in quite a long time that you kind of just tried to go out and race with raw pace and not think too much as far as strategy is concerned. Where did that decision and game plan kind of come from?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it was honestly to do with getting caught up by yellows like four times this year and just robbing us of a race win. So I thought I would just go hard, and kind of wish I did that in a couple other races this year like Indy road course and not save fuel and tires or any of that stuff. Just went.

I think that it was the right strategy and it kind of saves you from potentially getting caught by a yellow when you go laps longer. Obviously every race is different. Maybe it's a different story tomorrow if we don't start right at the very front, maybe do something different because we're not really in the points hunt, and yeah, we'll just take it as it comes.

But yeah, maybe more often than not I should just run hard, use my raw pace and try and win races that way.

Q. I know you'd much rather be in the hunt for the season championship, but as you mentioned, when you're not in that -- maybe when you have a best case scenario chance of going and finishing third or something like that, does that allow you to run a little bit freer and maybe feel a little bit like there's maybe not quite as much weight on your shoulders even entering a race and certainly during a race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, a little bit. I've been kind of down about the year, kind of came in expecting to be in the championship hunt because I haven't been for a few years.

I would much rather be in the hunt, honestly. Like it would be no more pressure. I'd be enjoying the battle. You can just take a bit more risk on strategy, honestly, because you have not as much to lose. It's not like you're going to lose a points lead or lose your chance of contending.

I guess in that respect there is a little bit less pressure on the guys on strategy, but personally I would love to be in the game.

Q. Josef, I know you mentioned that you felt like you're still in the hunt here for the championship; with four races to go now and I guess even in today's race with five left entering Saturday, are you at the point where you guys are paying attention much where Scott is during the race? Are you just kind of racing the 75 laps and seeing where things fall?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, we're just running to maximize each day, like always this year. We went out there and we tried to run the fastest race possible, and we were second best today, so we finished second. You know, we're going to try and go again tomorrow and just be as -- I don't think we're really looking at Scott necessarily, we're just trying to run the best race possible every race, and we expect to show up with winning cars and winning pace, and so we go in with the attitude that we can win the races. So if that's the case then we're going to finish as high as possible and Scott is going to be where he's going to be. You just got to hope that you're bringing a bit more to the table than him and nothing is really derailing that for you, that you've got obstacles outside of your control.

Yeah, I don't think we're really fixated on what they're doing, we're just trying to be the best that we can possibly be every event in every race and hopefully if we do that and put our best foot forward and we're fast, then hopefully we get the most points over these next four events and can win the championship.

Q. Will, what was it like to have a day like today; when you needed that hot lap in qualifying, you got it, just like the good ol' days, and when you needed a stout race you got it? What is that feeling you have deep down right now?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's satisfying, obviously, the amount of work that goes into a race weekend. I guess you feel a lot more satisfaction when you've had plenty of rough races where you've given away wins, so it's much more satisfying to finally get it, especially at a track where I've been trying

to win for years.

Yeah, you kind of can't enjoy it because you're thinking about tomorrow already. I'm thinking about tomorrow, how can I get the car better, how can we do the same thing. Yeah, it's something I'll think about next week, but yeah, man, over the moon. Like I love winning. I love racing. It's just all I do and all I think about, and to win is everything for me. Maybe my emotions are too roller coaster as far as results go, but I enjoy winning.

Q. This would be one of those races where you have like a week to enjoy it, right, but you've got to turn around tomorrow. You talked about the bath and massage you're looking forward to, but what is the key to getting back to full bore tomorrow morning?

WILL POWER: Yeah, good sleep, good rest, and really need to have a good think about the car, see if we can improve it and then give it our best shot tomorrow.

Q. Will, this was the shortest mid-Ohio race since INDYCAR came back in 2007 and tomorrow will be the same, 75 laps, where it's normally been 90 laps. When you talk about that decision just to say, screw it, I'm just going to go for pace, does the fact that it's a little bit more straightforward and I would presume that two stops, everybody is just going to have to go as hard as they can, did it kind of play into your favor a little bit that way?

WILL POWER: Yeah, that definitely made it easier. You know, you didn't have to choose between saving fuel and two-stop or going hard with three stops. Yes, it was a more straightforward strategy where people couldn't really go off strategy and kind of get in your way so you could use raw pace rather than actual strategy to win the race.

Actually it felt really long, though. It was crazy, after the last pit stop, I'm like, man, imagine if this had been 90 laps. Yeah, two stops, big windows. I think that makes it easy for a leader.

Q. Did it feel longer maybe because it had been that long since you'd won?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I was certainly thinking the last 20 laps, like I don't want to puncture, I don't want the yellow, I don't want rain, all these things you're thinking of. You just knuckle down and just rattle the laps off. But it was close to raining again, raining before the end of the race. But yeah, I've had a few of those lately where I've been leading the whole race and gearbox or yellow or something goes wrong. Yeah, it's good when you get one. I'll tell you, it's hard in this series. It's fantastic when you get one.

Q. Will, you talked a lot about your frustrations with good opportunities being missed for race wins this year. Does that pent-up frustration make this win more satisfying when everything just came together?

WILL POWER: It does, yeah. It certainly is motivation when you're racing, as well, and qualifying. You know, not that I actually honestly didn't really -- I thought about it in the race, the things that have happened this year, but in qualifying I get into a certain zone and it's a very enjoyable place to be. But in the race, these INDYCAR races, they can throw anything at you at any time just when everything is going right. You've got to always be on your toes and just do the best you can. That's all you can do. The other circumstances are just out of your hands.

Q. Dixon said that the shortening of the race made it more boring from a strategy perspective. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

WILL POWER: Yeah. Yeah, I would say if you had it at 90 laps there would be people on three stops and there would be people on two stops, and it certainly would mix things up, yes.

Q. I wanted to ask you, were you just keeping the gap steady to Rossi behind you? Like if he had caught up could you have had some pacing in reserve to get away from him?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, yeah. I was just kind of taking it easy in the end. Will had -- I don't even know how far up the road he was. I'm assuming he was seven or eight seconds, and yeah, I was just kind of chilling at that point. It was like, you know, if a yellow comes out, I want to be prepared to finish this off, at least secure a second place. I knew it was going to be hard to do much with Will today even with a yellow, so just trying to conserve my Push-to-Pass, conserve my position was really all I was concerned about at that point. So a little bit boring, but look, it's what you've got to do when you recognize that's where you're at for the day.

You know, Will was just clearly -- he was a tick quicker. It kind of ebbed and flowed in that first stint. I'd catch up and he'd pull away a little. It seemed like it was kind of bouncing back and forth between us but then I think he just showed that he could edge out a little bit on me and then he caught the cycle of the lap traffic a little better than me and ripped open a little better gap sort of in the middle of the race. At that point it was just, all right, bring it home in second place. I wish we could win, but it is what it is for today and we need to take what we can.

Q. Will, I wanted to ask you, did you see anything today, any merit in maybe mixing it up tomorrow? Say you start from the front row again, whether you'd consider starting on blacks, or do you always want to start with reds?

WILL POWER: Yeah, honestly it wasn't a huge difference between the tires today. They made a more durable red. But I think you'd always start on the red just because it's when everyone is very close together and fighting hard. Obviously a lot of people started on blacks, but probably because of what Dixon and Rosenqvist did last year, they made a lot of positions at the end of the first stint.

Yeah, it'll just depend on where we start totally. If we start in the front row it's hard not to use reds. It's very tough not to go reds.

Q. Was it easy to conserve the reds today then because they had been made more durable?

WILL POWER: Well, they started to go off at the end of the run for sure, more so than the blacks. So we pitted on the early side. I don't know when Josef pitted, but I'm sure he was feeling the same thing, you know, starting to struggle at the rear and then getting the front in. But cold tires certainly are tough. I have to say, heavy fuel and cold tires, it takes you a few laps to get up to speed.

Q. Will, you pretty much pulled away at the start, but elsewhere in the field it looked like it was pretty tough to pass. If you had started elsewhere other than the pole, do you think your car was good enough to get back up to the front?

WILL POWER: It's hard to say. I think it would be tough to pass someone who's similar pace to you. I just think it would be hard, like you'd have to do something strategy-wise. That's just how it seems to be at the moment with these cars. It's very, very tough -- it's pretty typical of this track. That's kind of what -- yes, Scott was mentioning when you have the two different strategies at 90 laps, you can do three or two stops, it mixes things up and there's a bit more passing and different tire strategies and fuel strategies and all that. But if pretty much everyone is on the same feel here, you're pitting four laps apart basically, everyone, and that's just kind of how it's been this year, unfortunately. Even at Texas everyone had to pit on lap 30 or whatever and it just made for a kind of boring race.

Q. At the start you said obviously working overnight trying to find a few tenths in the car, but obviously we know how competitive the series is so that's always difficult, but can you talk about how difficult it is in

kind of the new normal of 2020 because we've got the condensed schedules, you can't make too many changes to the car between -- sometimes we're seeing even qualifying and the race. How much more difficult is it to find that extra pace, especially when you run up front with those guys, how difficult that is in the current circumstances?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's tougher. You're kind of locked into to what you are to some degree. You kind of show up and have the car that you've decided to start with and you work on it a very little bit in practice and try and make it better or not make it worse, but on a normal weekend, you have a lot of time to digest in between multiple sessions, and you're able to look at your teammates constantly and figure out what really works well for you.

Yeah, I guess what this condensed format does is you're either kind of on it right away or you're not. If you love the car, great, you're already locked in to where you want to be. But if you're just a little off and you're looking for a little something extra, it's kind of hard to find that over the weekend. You've got to take some guesses at it and hopefully you guess right.

So for tomorrow I'm going to look at everything that Will did and obviously those guys will look at us, too. We'll all try and help each other be better. But yeah, we've got to try and make some educated guesses. You can't really test anything. You're going straight into qualifying so you've got to feel confident about what you're putting on the car, and hopefully we'll make some good changes that takes us up a level for tomorrow.

Q. How much confidence does the victory today give you going into the race in terms of your momentum for tomorrow, also obviously having to qualify, as well?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, you get plenty of data and you can understand what people do strategy-wise. It's like Josef said, it's a very quick weekend, so kind of got what you've got and you can just take stabs at trying to make it better. I think we rolled off reasonably well. I think people just kind of catch up to whoever is the quickest, which is us, so we've got to do our homework tonight and make sure that we improve, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everybody. Have a great evening.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

