

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday, October 3, 2020
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Will Power

Team Penske

Colton Herta

Andretti Autosport

Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We are here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway with the INDYCAR Harvest GP Race 2 post-race press conference. We are joined by Alexander Rossi with his fourth straight podium finish. Today he finished third.

Alex, tell us about your day here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it was a good day. I don't think it was as exciting as yesterday. We started third. We were able to have a pretty decent qualifying session. We were second most of the race.

I thought me, Will and Colton were kind of in our own kind of league for the most part, it was going to be a fight between the three of us, kind of who had the best last stint.

We tried to be a little different, go on the primary tires based on some of the stuff we saw yesterday with used reds with other people. I mean, it was a choice. Ultimately it wasn't the right one. I think in the position we were in, we were really happy with the car on blacks.

It's always going to be tough to beat Will when he's leading straight up. We tried to go for it, see if we could make something happen. Ultimately the difference between second and third.

I'm glad it was a teammate that beat us. Yeah, four races, four podiums, it's good. Just one more shot to get a win before the year is out.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. What does it mean to you going into the final race of the season coming off the momentum you've had with the four podiums? What have you learned from this weekend taking forward to the next race?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I'm thrilled we're going to a street track. I think those are our strengths as a team. Really excited to get to St. Pete obviously, not only for that but that's an awesome race for the NTT INDYCAR Series. It was crazy what happened back in March. The fact we're able to get back there is great. Huge testament to the series and city of St. Pete.

I think the whole team have kind of had a reset, we had a lot of hard conversations after Indianapolis in August. We really tried to change some things, just focus on making sure that we were doing our jobs right, get some sort of momentum going into the off-season so we can put this year behind us and start fresh in '21. I think we're doing that right now.

Obviously we're missing a little bit to get the win, second, third, second, third, it's frustrating. With the year we've had, I don't want to complain too much, so we're grateful to be in this position.

I think the pace we've had back, to have things go fairly trouble free, it's important to us to get a win, so we're going to put all of our focus forward to the race in St. Pete here in a couple weeks.

Q. In terms of the race in St. Pete, we're finishing the season with St. Pete, starting the season with St. Pete. Is that a bit of a benefit in terms of preparation for next season?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes and no. Every year it's a little bit different with obviously conditions, then the tires always change a little bit. It's a little difficult. I think for sure it will help because this is our first street race with the Aeroscreen. It will be a learning experience for all of us to kind of get through that.

For sure, everything probably won't be optimized, especially since it's kind of a condensed weekend against with only one practice.



Round two at St. Pete in March will be easier, but you can never say because you're good one time you'll be good the next year. We'll just take it one week at a time at this point and try and finish 2020 on the top step.

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by our second-place finisher, Colton Herta. Colton, tremendous pass today. Tell us about your day today.

COLTON HERTA: I think it started off pretty poor. I think I was trying to make it an extra lap in the stint, really using up a lot of my tires trying to keep Alex behind me. Kind of wore the rears off the car, didn't really have the pace that I needed to on the blacks.

Seemed like on used reds we really had the deg under control, we really had the pace over Alex and Will. So, yeah, I think happy with second. Overall the day went pretty well.

Obviously looking forward to St. Pete now. I'm sure Alex has said it, but seems like Andretti does a really good job with their street course cars, especially at St. Pete. I'm looking forward to getting there.

THE MODERATOR: I think we all are looking forward to getting to St. Pete at the end of the season.

We have also been joined by our race winner. It was his first wire-to-wire since 2011 at Barber Motorsports Park, and his second win in 2020.

Tell us about your day today.

WILL POWER: It was intense the whole time. Obviously we had to save fuel, but we were pushing really hard every lap to pull a gap enough to be covered if someone went one lap longer in the pit stop sequence.

A lot of pressure from Alex in the second stint, then a lot of pressure from Alex beginning of the third stint, then Colton was a lot of pressure all the way to the end. I really had nothing left. That was everything I had there at the end. Fortunately could hold them off.

Obviously a bit of lap traffic playing some games there, which I didn't really appreciate too much. It made for good racing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. What was the limiting factor in terms of trying to make passes? Was it just the marbles or not being able to use your 'push to pass' so much because everything was such a fuel save?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, no one could use 'push to pass' because unfortunately had to get a fuel number. Everyone really had to save fuel. Lifting, no one could attack. It certainly made for, yeah, a more boring race. I like that, but...

Q. Colton, did you feel that rubber marbles were the limiting factor in trying to pull a pass on Will at the end?

COLTON HERTA: To be honest, I personally used up all my tires to try to catch back up with him. I was six, seven seconds back. I had to use a lot of tire just to get back up to them. At that point I was just kind of hardly holding onto Will, applying pressure so maybe he could make a mistake.

I knew I wasn't going to be able to get by him just on pure pace there at the end. I think it's tough to pass when everybody is on the same strategy, same compound there at the end. I think that was why it's a little bit different to yesterday's race.

Q. Conor, how hairy did it get tracking down Will, coming down the front straight, Conor got confused on which lane to take? How close did it come?

COLTON HERTA: Did you call me Conor or Colton?

Q. Conor, Colton, long weekend (laughter). When Conor got in your way, Colton.

COLTON HERTA: I didn't really understand what happened there. I was just trying to poke myself out a little bit in the mirrors. I was following Will, he let Will by. I really wanted to try to follow Will into turn one and not get held up at all. I think he saw that.

I was poking out to the right. He thought I was going to go to the right. I ended up kind of tucking back in line. Then he tucked back in line, completely lifted or broke. Kind of caught me by surprise.

Luckily nothing really came of it. It was definitely closer than I'd like.

Q. It seems that you're all finishing the season on a high note. How important is that? I'm sure had the season started a little bit better for all three of you, you'd be fighting for a championship right now. We're at a stage where the three of you drivers are the ones fighting it out for victories at the end.

WILL POWER: I mean, yeah, it was kind of disappointing



not to be a part of the championship because we know we have the speed to do it. It's just yellows and some unfortunate incidents in the pits for us really put us out of contention.

One of these seasons I'm going to start strong. It's been a long time, but one day I will start strong. And that one day needs to be next year (smiling).

COLTON HERTA: I completely forgot your question. What was your question (laughter)?

Q. The three of you have been pretty hot.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think I've had a pretty strong season all year until Iowa. That really kind of drug us down in points. Finishing last in both races kind of put a hold on the championship hope.

Unfortunate, but I think finally got a podium. Been kind of wondering if I was ever going to get a podium if I didn't win. Finally got that under my belt. That's kind of what I'm focused on next year, is turning those fourth- and fifth-place finishes we had this year into podiums. That's what you need as a championship driver I think in this series, constantly to be finishing in the top five, getting wins, getting on the podium.

Q. Alex?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, same as everyone. I mean, I knew I wasn't going to win a championship pretty early on this year with all that happened. For us it just became about making the most of what races were left, trying to focus on our weaknesses, address issues that we have internally and externally. Just try to get things back going in a decent direction for everyone's mindset going into the winter. I think we've done that a little bit.

Haven't won yet, so that sucks. We have one more shot to do it. Like I said at the beginning, our street course cars are really strong. We have a good shot to do it. We're going to put our best foot forward and try to make it happen.

Q. Will, how difficult were the last many laps when you're trying to go mistake free, but you got to be looking in your mirrors a little bit? How intense was it?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was pretty intense because you had cars in front of you. That was the biggest problem. As soon as I had a bit of a gap, it made it easier for sure. Just lap traffic. I think we're the only series in the world that lap traffic can actually race you. Insane. Insane.

Q. What could change that?

WILL POWER: What could change it? The rules. You work your backside off to be at the front racing. For someone to race you when they're a lap down because they've done a bad job is just terrible.

Q. Will, you've had a tale of two seasons. How do you feel still with one race left this year that you will remember this year?

WILL POWER: I think I heard your question, how will I remember the year?

Q. Yes.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, obviously once again we've had such great potential with speed, all around. We have a fantastic team, great group of guys. Just kind of little mistakes here and there cost us dearly. Days we were going to win...

Last race I stalled in the pit, that could have been a recovery from seventh. Obviously got caught out by the yellow. Loose wheel at Iowa, went into the wall, kind of contending for a win there. Certainly a few events like that where we would have been well in the championship hunt had things gone the other way.

Q. You're coming on some pretty impressive individual marks with wins and poles over your career. As those continue to pile up, what level of frustration do you have still with one series title to your name at this point?

WILL POWER: Yeah, you're right. It's disappointing for me to look back and only have one title with the amount of wins, laps led, poles. Yeah, if you go through the last decade, I've had more wins, more poles, more laps led, but only one championship.

Q. Alexander and Colton, you started out the weekend with Honda pulling out of Formula 1 at the end of 2021, yet signing with INDYCAR for the rest of the decade. How happy are you guys to be able to continue to work with Honda in the future and know that you have that kind of backing going forward?

COLTON HERTA: I'm pretty happy. I don't know if it's a good thing to see Honda pulling out of Formula 1 for INDYCAR, what it means for INDYCAR. I think INDYCAR obviously is one of the top North American championships that we have. Yeah, no, obviously it's important to have two manufacturers. To have both of them till pretty much

the end of the decade is really important for the growth of INDYCAR.

I know Roger has been pretty vocal about getting a third manufacturer, and that would be awesome. For right now I'm happy with the work that Honda is doing for us in INDYCAR.

Q. Alexander?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, I'm thrilled. Obviously my relationship with Honda is very important to me personally and to Andretti Autosport. It's great news.

It's a huge testament to the work HPD has done to obviously win the 500 this year, to be in with a shot to win the championship this year, winning the manufacturers championship last year. It was a rough couple years there, aside from the month of May, so it's good that we've been able to elevate the performance globally as a manufacturer.

It's great news for the future of the sport. Hats off to everyone at HPD, Honda North America, Honda Japan, and also INDYCAR and Chevrolet. It's a group effort from all three parties. It's a lot of opposing interests styles, but ultimately it's all about furthering INDYCAR, what we all believe we have here is a fantastic product. I'm thrilled about it and I can't wait to see what the future holds with Honda going forward.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let Alex and Colton continue with their day. We'll see you in St. Pete.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thank you.

COLTON HERTA: Thanks very much.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Will.

Q. Will, I don't know if you read on the website today, there's been a track in Toowoomba named after you. Do you have any comment about that or whether you helped design it or what?

WILL POWER: Yeah, actually I think I will have some input into design. It's like a \$200 million project. It's a legitimate complex that they're going to build up there to the highest standard. The family that's building it, the guy is Wagner. They've been around Toowoomba for years. They do everything first class. They got big support from the government.

It's actually something I never would have imagined to have a complex like that named after me in my hometown.

Yeah, very cool, very cool.

Q. How do you feel about having your fellow Australian Scott Maclachlan join the team in St. Pete?

WILL POWER: Scott Maclachlan, he's done a really good job for Roger down in Australia. If we go off his testing, he's been very strong. I think he'll be eventually a championship-contending driver.

Yeah, he's from New Zealand, he's not from Australia by the way, but he does race in Australia. He has an accent like an Australian. If you're from New Zealand, you're pretty much Australian (laughter), but not quite as good. Dixon is not quite as good as an Australian. Although he was born in Brisbane, so he's kind of a Kiwi hiding from the fact that he is really an Australian. That's why he does so well, because he is Australian (laughter).

Q. Would a PRS drag reduction system work in INDYCAR? Would it be a better situation than the 'push to pass'? When you're up front you wouldn't want to see it. What is your take on that?

WILL POWER: My take is we can create a lot more passing by having a 'push to pass' lockout system. Actually have the technology to do it. If you get within a second of a car in front, it locks his 'push to pass' out, he can't use it. I feel like that's what we should do on a short oval like Gateway, create passing, maybe even Texas and some of the superspeedways.

Some of the tracks that have short straights, like St. Pete, Mid-Ohio, they should try it, implement it. I think they would see some really good racing.

Q. What is one thing you want that track in Toowoomba to have, a curve or something, that mirrors exactly what you're about?

WILL POWER: I would have a very technical section. A lot of technical tracks and sectors that you have to put together. We'll see. I mean, I think they should kind of have a real close look at the more recent tracks that have been built for Formula 1, like COTA, tracks like in Dubai. Some of these tracks are amazing complexes. I think they have the budget to do something like that, so yeah.

Q. In terms of drivers at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for INDYCAR in particular you've now won five times here, more than any other modern day driver. Four of those have come on the road course. Not the 500, but what does that mean to you?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it doesn't compare to the 500. I



would take a 500 win any day, maybe a 500 win for a couple of those road course wins. It's an amazing place, so much history, so many amazing drivers have come through here. Any time you win anything here, it's pretty special.

Now that Roger owns it, I've had a good relationship with Roger for 12 years that I've been in the team, was very happy with how the 500 went for us this year, that our team cars win two races this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everybody, for your questions. Thanks to Will Power. Congratulations on your second win of the season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports