

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Will Power

Team Penske
Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Will Power, driver of the No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet. First question, very important: We saw the birthday video. Did you get the donuts?

WILL POWER: I did. Got to look on my Instagram story. I bought the donuts for the people that made me great.

THE MODERATOR: It was a big birthday. Did you detect any gray hairs?

WILL POWER: It's actually looking pretty good. There is like the odd -- my wife says on the back of my neck I have some, but apart from that, the hair loss and the hair color has kind of maintained pretty well. I think Helio would be very jealous at this stage.

THE MODERATOR: Based on testing and the new addition to the team with Scott this year, what's the outlook for 2021 and for Team Penske?

WILL POWER: I feel like they've done a very good job of development. You know, and other teams would have, as well. But we haven't been quickest in testing, but we've certainly tried a lot of stuff and had some development items.

I feel pretty good about definitely being better than where we were last year at Indianapolis. I think that's probably the most disappointing we've been since I've been at Penske. It was a surprise to us. Certainly worked very hard on that.

I feel like we'll be much better than we were last year. So yeah, looking forward to really everything coming up.

Q. You mentioned the team's continued development of cars in the off-season. How do you anticipate adding a fourth car into the mix to change any sort of dynamic? I know you've raced with this team with three cars, with four cars a handful of seasons both.

What does that change typically do for you guys?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it's just more information and more quality people on the INDYCAR side. Obviously the sports car program went away and we took a lot of good people from that program. So yeah, just more engineering power and more information as far as drivers, setup info and all that sort of stuff.

Q. Entering this year in 2021, I know off track there's a lot going on in INDYCAR, hopefully we can get back to the series, the series looking to enter a new TV deal, trying to add a third engine manufacturer. When you look at all those things, I know you guys are so hyper focused at preparing for things on track, but as a series veteran, do you kind of sense all of this stuff going on around you guys and how important this season could be for the series future?

WILL POWER: I do actually. I think it's a very important season, and it is sort of concerning at times to think that -- we must have fans this year. We really must. It becomes very tough on these promoters when they're not getting the income from the ticket sales. Really praying that things open up, and in particular the 500, with everything that Roger has put into that place and all the effort that's gone on since the purchase, I really hope that we can have close to full capacity there. That's obviously dependent on a lot of other things at the moment.

Yeah, really hoping we can get another manufacturer. I think that would be great for the series. I'm sure that the series is working very hard on trying to make that happen. It needs to obviously happen with enough time for a manufacturer to be able to kind of catch up in a way to Honda and Chevy.

Q. Nobody is harder on you than yourself. You have lots of high expectations. If you don't win a race you usually aren't that happy about it. Do you look at this year as a rebound year for you?

WILL POWER: It actually does feel a little bit that way, you know, considering we've started the last four seasons in a really bad way. It certainly isn't speed that's the issue. It's our bad days are just too bad. Our bad days are DNFs and multiple laps down. They're not like a 10th place or a



seventh place, and that's our problem. The speed is certainly not. Winning is certainly not. Consistently, whether it's mistakes on pit lane or mistakes by me, you just -- we have to have a solid beginning to the season -- I mean, you've just got to have a solid season, and that obviously includes the beginning.

I said it last year, it's a huge focus, and that did not happen for us. This year, again, if we can just have a solid first few races, I think it gives the team confidence and myself confidence.

Q. Even though he's from New Zealand and you're from Australia, do you have a little bit of a kinship with Scott McLaughlin, the fact that you're both from the same part of the world and he was such a huge name in Australian Supercars?

WILL POWER: I think it's -- I was really happy he came over because it gives a lot of attention to INDYCAR from Australia. I think the TV ratings will be better because he was so popular there and won three championships in a row. I think it just brings more attention to INDYCAR, which now that we don't race down there doesn't get much love.

And also it's -- Scott is a good guy. He's from New Zealand but basically Australia, so we certainly get along well. I think he'll be a pretty quick guy.

Q. I just want to get it out of the way: Are you in a contract year this year?

WILL POWER: Yes.

Q. So does that change anything for how you're racing or how you feel?

WILL POWER: No, it doesn't. It really -- same effort that I put in because I had put so much effort in every time. I so badly want to win. Yep, same fire, internal fire burning. Just do as I do, do obviously my best.

Q. It's Roger's second year owning the series. I'm wondering what you took away from year one and what you think might happen in year two.

WILL POWER: Obviously a very awkward first year for Roger, unfortunately because of COVID. Really just hoping, like I said before that we can have fans at the races and things kind of return to normal, which helps everyone, helps the series, helps the promoters. Yeah, I think it's important for pretty much all sports, but for our sport in particular, yeah, it's just tough on these promoters not getting ticket sales. In turn, INDYCAR probably doesn't

get the sanctioning fees. Yep, we're fortunate to have had Roger in this time I would say, very fortunate to have someone like that steering the ship.

Q. You played tennis with Brad Keselowski the other day; how are things over on that side of the team after the Daytona 500 finish?

WILL POWER: Yeah, actually that was an old video from a few years ago, so they've declined massively since then -- no, just kidding. I haven't seen Brad for a while. Yeah, obviously would have been an interesting conversation after the Daytona 500. It is a massive race to win, and I think it's the team's worst nightmare when in the 500, Indy 500 or the Daytona 500, you've got two or three guys from their team fighting it out. In one hand it's a nightmare because it's like, man, I hope we don't take each other out because it's such an important event, but on the other hand it means the team has done an amazing job to have two cars or three cars up there. So yeah, I'm sure -- it's a good problem to have. Let's say that.

Q. How is the Invisalign?

WILL POWER: It's not Invisalign. I went the full braces. My teeth had to move too much. Invisalign was going to be twice the time. I'm getting close, getting close to getting them off and then I've got cracked teeth, so they've got to replace a bunch of teeth and all this. It'll be a great smile when I'm all done. I used to smile like this, so I'll be able to really get to do that once I get them. There's a lot of serious faces, like, Will, just get on with the bloody conference.

Q. Actually I just had a question about first Indy and if you'll be involved at all with the team or with Miles during the season at all.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I keep in contact with Miles. I found him years ago at a kart track. I really think he'll be great. I think he will surprise people in that field. I think he'll be very competitive. He's been put in a perfect position to be given enough miles and a team around him that has a budget to do everything necessary to be competitive.

Yeah, I'll be watching. I have nothing to do with the day-to-day running or anything of that team, but I certainly had a lot to do with Miles getting into that seat, and I have some other kids that I'm working with, African-American kids that are doing very well in go-karting, and I think I really hope can get into that program. That's the tough bridge to gap, like to get from karting to cars is very tough, and that's what happened to Miles. He did one year of cars and they just simply didn't have the money to do it. So it's so great to see a driver that has the talent make it,

and I hope there will be others after him.

Q. Obviously Scott McLaughlin has joined the team. Is there anything that you can learn from him in terms of his driving style or do you think that maybe you can kind of bring to the table in terms of his development during the season?

WILL POWER: Yeah, you know, it's such a different animal to what he was driving. I think there's not much that -- I mean, you couldn't say there's not much that converts over, otherwise he wouldn't be on the pace. Obviously the biggest change for him is the amount of downforce and commitment with these cars, like the faster you go, the more grip you have, significantly so.

Yeah, there will be things you learn off him, that we learn off him, especially in slow corners when the car is more about mechanical grip, what he's used to, but yeah, he'll be doing most of the learning just because it's his first year in the car. But yeah, he'll be -- he's going to be solid. He'll be very good in years to come.

THE MODERATOR: Will, thanks for your time. We very much appreciate it. Best of luck this year and keep the Instagram stories coming, man. They're social gold.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I'm trying to work out whether people like them or not.

THE MODERATOR: Oh, the one with the lighter --

WILL POWER: Oh, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: All-time classic.

WILL POWER: I'll keep them coming, I promise.

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