

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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## Scott Dixon Will Power Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by our second and third-place finishers today, Will Power from the No. 12 Team Penske Verizon, and No. 9 Scott Dixon from Chip Ganassi Racing who drives the PNC Bank car.

Thanks for joining us. We'll start with Will. I know you had a lot of momentum going out of last season and you wanted to get off to a good start. Go ahead and talk about your day for us, please.

WILL POWER: Yeah, obviously went from a three stopper to a two stopper with all those yellows at the beginning, which I didn't mind. I know we're very good at getting fuel and lap time, but Alex pulled away extremely fast.

I was surprised. I actually thought he was on a three stopper. But I think he had a very good middle stint saving fuel, and we came out close to him.

I still had to save a bit of fuel at the end there, so in the last few laps I could use Push-to-Pass. Made a little mistake which made the gap not possible to close.

Very happy with the day, though. Really, really just wanted a solid start to the season, and that's what we got here so far.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, obviously a wonderful podium finish for you and a great day for Chip Ganassi Racing with Alex Palou getting his first win. Go ahead and tell us about your day, as well.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely a huge day for the team. So good to see the 10 not just back on the podium but winning a race. It's been a lot of fun in the off-season. I think Alex has done a tremendous job. I think we had good pace.

It was just very tough once you were kind of in traffic and we even felt that once Will and I caught some lap traffic I

think that middle stint we could have extended by probably another three laps, but because we caught that I think we just had to pit anyway to try and cover the 8 that was maybe trying to short pit us and jump on that situation.

Yeah, just, I don't know, it was kind of a bit of a blah day for us. We kind of sat there, tried to make some moments on the 12 car and with Will, but we just couldn't get close enough to pull it off and the speeds were so similar.

So congrats to everybody on the podium, and it's great to be back in Alabama. It was great to be back on the podium for us. Hopefully we can move up a couple spots come next weekend.

**Q. Scott, I guess you've tested with Alex so you have a little bit of an idea what he's got; but Will, how familiar are you with Alex, and did you guys see or know that he had a win in him?**

WILL POWER: Yeah. Yeah, I did, from last year, some of the pace he had at times and what he'd done in his previous series that he raced in. He was very, very good, a champion. It's not really a big surprise. It actually makes Ganassi a much stronger team because they've got two guys now that can win races (indiscernible).

**Q. I know you've tested with Alex; were you expecting him to win so soon?**

SCOTT DIXON: You know, it's hard to judge that, I think, just for the sheer fact that there's so many great teams, especially when you get to the first few races, it's hard to solidly know.

But yeah, his speed has been really good in preseason testing. We like a lot of similar things, the three of us, so it was good to see three CGR cars in the Fast Six. I'm not sure that's ever happened for us, so that was really good for us.

But last year, I think, as Will commented, even his podium at Elkhart was a pretty big effort coming through the field and what he did there and some of the speeds you saw with the team in his first season and last season for any kind of rookie was very tough. You hardly got any kind of track time.



Yeah, he turned up strong and it was the first one of the season. You can't start a season any better than that, and just feel real happy for him and the 10 car team, and it's definitely going to be a hell of a fight.

**Q. I'm also curious, Jimmie yesterday tweeted he wasn't last in qualifying and he seemed really happy today after his race. Are these things that are small victories? They don't seem like victories, but are they?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, absolutely. Again, I couldn't think of anything more difficult than what he's trying to accomplish. So I think some people said, Oh, you know, wait for judging anything until midway through the season, but I think you've got to wait until next season. I hope and I think the deal goes through next year.

But you know, as we see from my rookies, even from Alex last year, he didn't get a win. It takes time to progress, and once you get some laps, and even this year with limited schedules that we have on track time and tires, it just becomes very hard.

You want to push, but then you also don't want to crash the car. So it's a very fine balance.

I don't know, I think he finished in 18th or 19th. I saw he had a spin there. Without the spin I think he would have been a lot better off. You know, he beat five or six cars; that's awesome.

**Q. Alex seems to be so upbeat and so positive in addition to being fast. What is it really like working with him, because talking to him the other day and talking to him all last season, he just always seems to be very positive and upbeat.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, he's actually one of those really nice guys. There has to be some underlying thing going on there somewhere. None of us have found it yet, but no, he's a really nice person. His family -- I've met his dad a few times now. Everyone is just super nice.

It's great to see somebody that's easy to work with. Some drivers that we all get to work with can be somewhat difficult, but he also is extremely willing and wanting to learn, asks a lot of questions, sends a lot of text messages to try and just do a better job.

He's been a real pleasure to work with through these times, the same with Marcus throughout the season, obviously Jimmie, as well. Yeah, he's just a super nice person.

**Q. Do you think it helped him a little bit that there was so much attention placed on the other guy that's the newcomer to the team, that he was able to just go about and do what he was supposed to do, to go out there with the 10 car and have a good season?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, maybe. But I think Alex is more of a kind of an under-the-radar type of person anyway. He's not very in your face or anything like that. You know, he definitely has a pretty relaxed personality, and then I think just wants the results to speak for themselves. Jimmie has been working hard, harder than all of us, I think, and that's a different dynamic all on its own, and maybe that does take a little bit of pressure off.

I also think when it's a four car team as opposed to a two car team that takes a little bit of pressure off, as well.

**Q. For Will, to save your Push-to-Pass for the end of the race, how were you able to do that, and how realistic -- if you had been able to close the gap a little bit on Alex, how difficult would it have been to pass him?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's pretty tough once you get close to them to pass. He would have had to have made a mistake or got caught behind someone slow that made a mistake.

I had saved enough fuel to use Push-to-Pass for the last two laps, then I made a mistake in Turn 9 and that opened the gap up too much. I closed right up to him at the end.

Obviously it's the last lap and he's not going to take any risks, but yeah, he was solid all day. It's very, very tough to even -- when he was pushing, it was so tough to close the gap. Yeah, I was happy just to have a good start to the year. Obviously it's only race one, but you know, obviously a win is always great. But compared to the way we started last season, this is nice.

**Q. I wanted to ask how difficult it was to look after your red tires in that first stint and whether you think you would have had the same issues as O'Ward and Rossi appeared to have on the reds if you had gone after it and gone for a three-stop strategy.**

WILL POWER: No, actually tires lasted the whole time for me. I could still pump out really fast laps at the end of the stint. They never went off. Reds never went off and the blacks never went off. They were just good. Yeah, I'm not sure if anyone else had issues, but that's how it felt to me.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I thought the reds were really good. I spoke to Pato briefly, and he said like they were just

trying to cover the 27, so I don't think they were planning on doing that, and I don't think their degradation was playing into -- they I guess just thought everybody was going to switch after that three-stop strategy.

But yeah, I concur with Will that we had no real tire wear issues. We had some balance issues. It was definitely behind somebody or in traffic and maybe tire wear was up a little bit because of that. But yeah, tire wear was actually really good.

**Q. I haven't checked the Firestone report yet, but did you struggle to get fresh blacks up to temp? Because that was another thing that Pato seemed to struggle on, as well, like it took ages for the fresh blacks to come in.**

SCOTT DIXON: Mine, not too bad. I think kind of by lap 2, like your first out lap was a little tough on just trying to get rotation. Seems like the rears came in really quick for us just trying to get the car turned. But after the first kind of out lap and in your first time, they seemed to be pretty good.

I don't know what the other teams seemed to struggle with. We definitely caught the 10 car a lot I think on that last switchover or last pit stop sequence. So yeah, maybe some cars did struggle with that.

**Q. Will, you touched on the start to the season and how you felt about that earlier, and I wanted to ask you a little bit more about that. Does this feel like kind of an emotional result for you? I know you're always looking for a win, but you've talked so much about needing that real strong start to the season. How are you kind of feeling sitting here now knowing that you've at least got that first race out of the way and scored a strong result?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's just obviously satisfying to get a good start. Obviously it was a very calm day for me, and I'm calm about the season, to be honest. I've been around long enough to know how this ebbs and flows, and I think I've got a very good group of guys on my car this year.

I'm very happy with it. I think our stops are going to be really good all year. I think we've got the right combination to win another championship.

Yeah, just been calm, honestly, about the whole thing, and just trying to get the most out of every weekend and every situation we find ourselves in.

**Q. Scott, nice to have another driver in the team who's capable of winning a race, and I guess you had that**

**with Felix a little bit in the past, but it's probably been looking back to Dario the last time you had a regular winner in the team. Just wondered how you kind of interpret that because I guess for you, you want a strong teammate to help push the team forward and score points on a bad day, but at the same time Alex is taking points away from your championship today, so how do you kind of interpret that?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's fantastic. At points we did have with that -- you know, with Felix and Marcus definitely had a strong start in qualifying. I don't know what happened with them later in the race, but he had a really strong actual second stint. He closed like an eight-second gap on Will and I, but looks like he maybe had fuel issues toward the end there.

Yeah, you know, I think it's great. It's kind of pushed the team forward, as you saw. I think, in qualifying to have three Ganassi cars in the Fast Six was a big day for us. Obviously we'd have wanted that to be one, two, three, but we were definitely a lot closer than we were in the past.

I think it will drive the team forward. It's great for team morale. It's great for the 10 car group. Obviously we expanded a lot in the off-season with additional INDYCAR, also the Xfinity and then the Cadillac program.

It's definitely been an interesting off-season, but this is huge for the team and hopefully that pumps everybody up.

**Q. Scott, how much momentum does this give you guys as a team going forward to St. Pete but then also kind of further on in the season?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I hope so. I know Alex is going to be pretty pumped, so I think that will pull the whole team along. I think even when you have a bit of a bad day in that situation, that's going to pump you up, as well, just because the team has done so well.

Obviously a very different circuit, very different tires. There's a lot of different things that go into it. We'll keep our head down, of course, for confidence and feeling good this is a huge weekend for us as a whole, but it doesn't guarantee you anything.

You've got to work hard and put in the effort, and hopefully all of our cars will be strong come next week.

**Q. Just a quick word on Jimmie for next week. Obviously he was with you guys in St. Pete last year. How do you think he's going to perform on a street course for the first time?**

SCOTT DIXON: It's definitely going to be an eye opener for Jimmie. He's spent a good amount of time on the (indiscernible)^ which is definitely going to help the transition somewhat.

But a lot of us, it's more of like a commitment level that you kind of have to step outside the bounds a little bit to get the tire to work and then to get the confidence again, and it kind of just rolls into something.

So if you're a bit timid, the car feels horrible and you never really get on top of it. You've got to be aggressive but confidently aggressive, and I think we've tried to do enough sort of prep work with Jimmie that will help him get into it.

Detroit will be definitely a lot more difficult I think just for the first street course because of the grip levels there. Hopefully it goes well, but I know he's definitely put in the time and effort.

But again, you just get such limited track time these days with a couple of sessions and then you're straight into qualifying, so hopefully it goes well for him.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Will, and good luck next week in St. Pete.

**Q. I'm just going slightly off tangent for you, Scott. You'll understand it. We've got effectively five Kiwis now up in the States in the greater INDYCAR Series with three in the Road to Indy, and as you know, I'm a trustee of the Motor Sport Academy down here, and these guys are seeing you very much as the guy to emulate and be one day.**

I just wonder how that makes you feel as a New Zealander knowing we're getting more and more Kiwis up to the States now? Those that can travel, of course.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's huge. I've been waiting 20 years to have a fellow Kiwi on the grid in INDYCAR, and that finally happened. Haven't seen how Scott did this afternoon, but he's done a tremendous job I think with fitting in and obviously with a great team.

But yeah, you know, I've caught up with Peter Vodanovich and then Hunter McElrea, and then I haven't seen I think it's Billy Frazer, I haven't seen him.

But been trying to keep up to speed on how they've done in races. I know they had a lot of bad luck this weekend with sort of mechanical issues. I think Hunter did a pretty good job.

Yeah, it's great. I think there's definitely a lot of talent in

New Zealand. A lot of it sort of goes straight to Australia, whether it's Supercars or Porsche Cup or anything like that, but it's great to sort of see them tracking back to the American side and using the Road to Indy, which hopefully one day all three of those guys in those categories can make it to INDYCAR.

**Q. It's important to come out of the box in good shape, isn't it?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, absolutely. It would have been if we had one, two, three for the team or one two three four. Obviously good stuff for the 10 car. St. Pete's will be interesting. Texas will be interesting. It was a track we didn't test at where I think the rest of the field did.

So it's a double-header, so could have a big swing potential in the points, but, yeah, I think the team is confident. I think we've covered a lot of areas I think in the off-season and tried to focus a little bit more, and the addition of Alex and Marcus sort of working on different parts of the program I think has really brought the team together, and we're definitely working well.

It's only one race, we'll just have to see how the next few go.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Scott, for joining us.