

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Pietro Fittipaldi

Dale Coyne Racing with RWR

Scott McLaughlin

Team Penske

Press Conference



INDYCAR, especially on the ovals. I love oval racing. I used to race late models. I did a couple oval races back in 2018. To be back racing on an oval, I'm very happy about it.

We tested at Texas a couple weeks ago, then Indianapolis after Texas. I was able to get back in the groove. The team did a great job in getting me back into the rhythm of racing on ovals. I'm looking forward to it.

It's a doubleheader, going to be very physical over there. Got to be patient, like Scott said, especially at Texas. There's a lot to learn as well for me coming into it after being out for two, three years. Yeah, just be patient. It's a very long race.

THE MODERATOR: You've undoubtedly watched the first couple races of the season this year. Have you seen any trends? What is your critique so far of 2021?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: There was some exciting races. Even at Barber I was watching from abroad. I was watching a lot from the INDYCAR app because you guys have those onboards. It's really cool because you can watch everything. You even have the radio coms from the drivers. It's good to watch to kind of understand the procedures on race starts. Ovals are different, but you still kind of get the hang of things.

St. Pete, I was there in person.

It's been an exciting season. It's very competitive even for Dale Coyne, Romain finished 10th in the first race, then 13th in the second one. The car has been competitive. On an oval it's going to be different. Hope we can replicate.

The goal would be getting some top 10 results. Obviously the goal is to win every time, but it's very difficult. It's a very competitive championship.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for the plug for the INDYCAR App Powered by NTT Data.

Scott, this season has only just begun. 40 points separating the top 18 right now in the standings. Given the parity, do you think this is going to be a tight season all season long?

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Let's go ahead and get started. Thanks for Zooming with us here this afternoon.

Obviously a very big weekend, two different perspectives heading into it. NTT INDYCAR SERIES rookie Scott McLaughlin will be making his essentially oval debut at Texas Motor Speedway, racing Genesys 300 and the XPEL 375, in the No. 3 PPG Team Penske Chevrolet. While Pietro Fittipaldi will be making his debut in the No. 51 Nurtec ODT Honda with Dale Coyne Racing with RWR. Pietro a veteran of six INDYCAR races back in 2018, and both are obviously very much ready to go as we head back to Texas this weekend.

Let's start with Scott. Back to Texas Motor Speedway. How much are you looking forward to the weekend?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Excited. I'm very excited for my first oval experience. Had a lot of fun, a lot of enjoyment testing there not long ago. Obviously the Indy open test as well. I feel like we've got a raceable car. Heading there with the confidence of potentially doing well if I get it all right.

Of course, I've got a lot to learn with the draft and the dirty air, using the weight jacker, all my tools inside the car, something I have to get used to as well.

Like I said, thankfully we've had those test days. I feel comfortable going into it and can only learn from here.

THE MODERATOR: Pietro, you tested earlier this month. What are you looking forward to the most heading into the weekend?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I'm very excited. I guess what I'm looking forward to the most is to be back racing in



SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: One good result, especially a weekend like this where it's a doubleheader, if you have a car good enough for both days, get two top five finish, you're going to put yourself somewhere thereabouts for the championship fight.

It's an important weekend for a lot of people. Got the same amount of points value as the Indy 500 does. It's going to be exciting racing itself.

I think it's going to be interesting with this new aero package, get a feel for what it's like in traffic, how close we can follow and make moves as well. A lot to unravel here.

Very exciting, like the Pietro said. It started with a bang. It's really exciting to be a part of it. Loving it. Racing every week. It's exactly what I came to America for. Really excited to continue that trend this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Let's go ahead and open it up for questions.

Q. Pietro, do you find it slightly ironic that even though you love oval racing your vast experience comes in road racing, and you're now an oval specialist in INDYCAR?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I mean, I have to be an oval specialist because I'm doing all the ovals this year, all the ovals for the 51 car. I'm going to have to try to make myself an oval specialist.

Yeah, it is. I started my career racing cars, I started with late models instead of going straight to single-seaters. I won the late model championship at Hickory back in 2011. That's when I got the chance to go to Europe.

But yeah, I mean, there's still a lot to learn for me as well. To race single-seaters on an oval, it's very different, especially now with the aeroscreen. The car has a bit of a different balance than what I was used to from before. Following cars is always very difficult to get used to as well, gaining that experience not only in Texas but as well for Indianapolis.

You can run laps on your own good, run fast laps, you could be quick in qualifying, but you go out in the race, it's going to be hard to get that experience of following in traffic, trying to time passes and stuff. That's going to be the main thing, trying to gain as much experience with that in Texas, then execute everything that's in my control and get the best result possible.

Q. What kind of advice have you gotten from Emmo

and Christian?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I mean, I spoke to Christian recently. It's taking it step by step on the ovals. Max, who is my uncle as well, is the INDYCAR race steward. He was there at Texas because Cody Ware, our teammate, was there, too. We were doing a rookie orientation day. Max was there evaluating us. He's my uncle, married to my mom's sister.

He's been kind of taking me through the ropes a lot, too, teaching me everything I have to know when I was there at Texas and Indianapolis. I was in a car with him and Arie Luyendyk, in a pace car, doing laps at Indianapolis. Max was like, Arie, you have to teach him the tricks on how to do a pole lap. Arie has, like, the quickest pole lap.

I was there with them, they were telling me all the tricks and stuff of Indianapolis. It's awesome, great to have that support.

Q. Scott, you've spent so much time already in an INDYCAR at Texas Motor Speedway. What is it going to be like to finally go out there and race?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's so exciting. It's certainly going to be very different in the race to get a feel for everything and what I need to do, changing my tools, like I said, weight jackers in front, rear anti-roll bars, all that sort of stuff. That's all stuff I'm going to have to learn. Even little things like coming into pit lane, it's different jumping down to the apron there.

It's exciting, nice to do a completely different discipline. I think I'm more excited for the ovals than I am for the road courses because it's so different to what I've done before. It's so fast. Just nothing that's quite as exhilarating as going 220 miles an hour with people wheel-to-wheel.

That's what's so cool with INDYCAR racing, what's so pure about it, what makes it so different to any really sport in the world, is we have a vast difference in tracks. We got a road, we got street courses, ovals, big fast oval, short ovals. It's pretty cool and requires a whole different type of discipline which is what I'm really excited about for this weekend.

Q. You're doing three different types of course, four races in a 14-day period. I guess that's a cram course.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's perfect for a rookie (laughter). Exactly what I want.

No, ideally I'd love to do something a little bit more -- I'd love to have a bit more time on each one, but that's not



how it works. I feel like I just got myself sorted on the road course, we jumped on the street course, which had a different tire, got a feel for the tire there. I'm going to jump into an oval and basically throw out the past two weeks' work and focus on something completely different. But that's why we love it.

Q. I think we have a park firm way rules between qualifying and the race. Basically practice, qualifying and race will all be on race downforce settings. Does that simplify your lives or would you prefer to have the two different stages of settings so that prepared you a little more for when you start trimming out during Indy 500 qualifying?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: For me, we were just talking about that today. Parc ferme, obviously we will be qualifying pretty much on race condition stuff. I think we start the race on our qualifying tires.

It does take one less complication out of it for me to learn. For me, it's probably nice to have the whole month of May basically to prep myself for trimming out qualifying, getting confidence in that department.

Yeah, look, for sure it would probably be nice to have an idea of what I want before I head to Indy in terms of qualifying trim. Like I said, we've got the full month to build up to it. It does make it a lot more simple for someone like myself, even I guess for Pietro who is coming in not a full-timer right now, just to get used to the car. I'm sure it might help a little bit, too.

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Without a doubt, I agree with Scott. It makes things a bit more simple going into a race weekend as well. You have one practice. If you were allowed to change the downforce levels, you don't have that much experience, then do a qualifying downforce in practice, then change to race, I don't think you have enough time to get enough laps. You would be kind of going into qualifying or the race without much experience on the downforce. In Indy, you have all those weeks of testing and stuff.

For me it's better that way, just to keep that variable out of it. I'll be able I think to learn more like this without going into really any unknowns.

Q. Scott, it's been an interesting start to the season for you. You've been a top 10 car pretty much in both races. Things probably didn't quite go your way strategy-wise. How do you reflect on how that's gone? If that is the case, if you are a top 10 car, that's got to be a pretty good start to your INDYCAR car career given how strong the field is at the moment.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: For sure. It's been a good start to the year. I thought it was over after the first 30 seconds at Barber. Thought I was going to get collected in that shunt. It was nice to get around that.

The biggest challenge for me so far has been qualifying. Understanding especially last weekend at St. Pete, I was quite disappointed with my qualifying because I was in the top eight through the whole weekend before leading up to it, felt really strong within the race car.

Just getting the feel of the red tires in qualifying has been difficult, not only at the street course but also on the road course. That's all taking time.

Probably right now qualifying is my Achilles' heel at the moment, I need to work on, which I'll try to do. Certainly in the race I feel like we've had a really fast car and felt really strong in the races. Made a couple moves here and there, battling hard.

The race craft thing has sort of come naturally for me in terms I was a little bit nervous in what it would be like, open-wheel, side-by-side. I've had some pretty hard battles with some pretty tough guys, Takuma Sato, raced with Bourdais, a couple other people, people that race hard but fair. I've enjoyed it.

Like you said, we've had a top 10 car. It's been a pretty solid start. We just have to keep it going from now on.

Q. Approaching an oval debut is not as simple as focusing on one thing. Any one area that Penske has been advising you to work on for this weekend? Is there like a major focus for you to make sure you get one thing sorted for the weekend?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think it's my understanding of the timing in the oval, understanding how hard do I drive into the corner, working out my exits so I get runs down into turn three or into turn one. When do I make a passing move, how do I save fuel on an oval. One thing that's a little bit different as well.

Race strategy is a big thing. Especially in INDYCAR, the fuel saving is a huge thing. Trying to drive fast while saving more fuel certainly helps you in the long-term.

Yeah, a lot of things I have had to focus on. But certainly the race itself, like I said, the time, my passes have been one big focus for me. Thankfully I have thousands of hours of footage I can watch from previous years, including our testing, which will help.



Q. Scott, first time racing on an oval. There's a lot of information probably coming at you all at once. What is your biggest concern going into a doubleheader this weekend, like on the high banks of Texas?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Biggest concern? Probably I guess coming out of here with not many points. I think it's a big points weekend. I don't have too many concerns about where I'm placed and how I feel in the race car. I feel very comfortable, ready for the challenge. So I'm not concerned about any of that.

Probably knowing that I need to get a solid couple of races under my belt, not only just for championship-wise, but at the same time it's for my confidence leading into the next big oval, which is the biggest race of my life, the Indy 500.

I'm certainly aware of how important these next two races are this weekend, and will be doing my very best to have a pretty solid run in all facets, in-laps, out-laps, passing, saving fuel, all that sort of stuff. I'm really looking forward to the challenge of that.

Q. You have your simulator behind you there.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

Q. How has that been able to help you with ovals, or has it?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's certainly been a little bit of a help, more so with my spotter. I've never worked with a spotter before. Being able to have him on my Discord, the app that we use, he basically calls races like we would have in real life. He'd view it on iRacing.

Doing the odd INDYCAR race and stuff, he can talk to you, inside, outside, clear, outside line is working, inside line is working, all the normal chat we would have. But just getting familiar with all that sort of stuff is a big thing for me, something that I've never really had before. I've never had a spotter. That's all new to me. Probably that's one thing the sim has helped with.

Q. Pietro, not a ton of oval experience, not a ton of time in the INDYCAR either. What is your main concern coming into a doubleheader like Texas?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I think for me it's a big thing of having two good races there so we can build on it in Indianapolis. I'd say it's being patient on the ovals, running in dirty air. I think it's going to be difficult at Texas to follow cars and overtake. If you have the right setup, especially for dirty air, it's going to make a big difference.

We will work on that in practice, it's a short practice, then you go straight into qualifying, so there's not so much you can do. If you can unload, get the car out of the truck and it's already in a good place, that's going to be very important.

Then I think physically it's going to be very tough because it's two races, one Saturday, one Sunday. I think the first race is 212 laps, the race on Sunday is 248. They're very long and it's very physical.

I think people sometimes don't understand how physical it is on an oval because you just turn left. Scott can say it, too, but it's extremely physical. After like a stint, you're destroyed. I'm sure that after a whole race, you need to recover Saturday night to be ready again for Sunday because that's an even longer race and it's more in the day so it's going to be even harder in the car.

Q. Pietro, timing, you mentioned timing with passing. How is that something you work on for an oval like Texas?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, you look at race footage and stuff from before, how the car kind of handled in traffic, how people used to plan their runs on the car ahead. Very easy to kind of overdrive the entry of the corners, not get a run out on a guy on exit of one, two or three and four. Sometimes you have to plan it a couple laps ahead. Sometimes the guys ahead are in heavy traffic, you start getting a run, if you time it right, you can easily overtake. It's just kind of studying race footage.

The main practice is going to be when you're there practicing with all the cars around. When we tested at Texas, I was running by myself, only me and Cody Ware were on track. It's going to be in practice, running in traffic.

Throughout the race, too, it's a long race. For sure you're going to be doing some learning. From the middle to the end of race you're going to be a lot more prepared than when you started the race.

Q. Scott, how beneficial is it to you to Josef, Simon, Will in the team, giving their experience on ovals?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Invaluable (smiling). It's the thing that I take very seriously, listen to a lot of their advice. I definitely ask for a lot. I'm in their ear all the time, watching all their footage, looking at all their data, just little things.

But they could easily be hiding away a lot of the stuff, not try and show me too much. But they've been fantastic in all facets. There's stuff they're probably hiding from me, but at the same time that's what racing is all about with

teammates. Everyone hides that last little 10th. That's about me trying to find that myself. That's what motorsport is all about.

Q. Obviously when you tested there recently, did you do practice, pit stops going into the box, all that kind of thing? It's going to be very busy on Saturday. Kind of the same for you, Pietro. You're going to have loads of cars going into pit lane if we have cautions. Any kind of way you train yourself to try to avoid an incident in pit lane?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, I think it's more just being instinctive, having a feel of what's ahead of you, understanding with your spotter and stuff. Communication is a big thing.

Yeah, we did do a lot of practice, a lot of race runs, so basically full stints. Obviously I'll (indiscernible) with my weight jacker, tools for the whole stint, resetting them before I got in the box. If you have one side that's too heavy you can easily lock a wheel going into pit lane and overshoot the pit box.

There's a lot to think about towards the end of a stint in an INDYCAR on the ovals. Thankfully had a lot of practice with that.

Q. Pietro, has Dale given you any advice going into the start of the season?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, Dale is the race strategist on the 51 car, so he's there on the pit stand. Good to have Dale there, he has a lot of experience. He's always been very helpful with the advice he gives.

It's all about being patient on the ovals. That's one thing he said a lot, You got to be patient, take it step by step. It's always easy to get excited on ovals because there's a lot of adrenaline and stuff. It's just about taking it easy, taking things step by step.

It's a long race as well, so things you're going to be learning, tuning the car throughout the race with wings and stuff, and even with driving.

I'm sure, like, from the first race to the second, we're going to make a huge step.

Q. I know you tested here a few weeks ago in Indy. You have both been at Texas. Any extra set of nerves, like a different mindset going into this weekend, like an excitement of something you've never done before racing at Texas?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: For me it's the excitement of having never done it before, experiencing what it's like. That's something that is going to be so cool, so refreshing for me. First career start on an oval. Why not do it in the fastest race car of all? It's a cool thing.

Q. Pietro, you raced at Phoenix before. Obviously different than a short track. Any different nerves for you coming into this weekend?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Yeah, I mean, the cars are a little bit different from when I raced in 2018, Phoenix, Gateway and Pocono. I mean, I'm just extremely excited.

The ovals are very intimidating, especially when you have 20 other cars running around you and stuff. Just got to keep your cool and take it step by step. But it's definitely very intimidating. The adrenaline is super high, more than any other thing that I've driven, and I've driven a lot of different race cars.

Yeah, I'm very excited.

Q. Is this a different weekend for you guys in the sense you have one hour to practice to prepare for two races? Is it more of a learning weekend? Don't know how much you can take from one to the other than seat time. Different focus, mindset for both races?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I think you can definitely take what you learned from race one into race two. We say we're going to be learning and stuff, but at the same time trying to get the best result possible. It's not just like we're going to be driving around. We all want to win. We're going to be driving hard, to be pushing.

The thing is as we're doing that, trying to execute everything within our control. We're going to be learning because our experience level isn't that high in the oval racing and in INDYCAR. The learning is going to be part of it.

For sure after race one, you're going to be, in my opinion, more prepared for race two.

Q. Pietro, last year you spent a lot of time in the F1 paddock. You were replacing Romain on the oval tracks. What were Romain's first comments after two races that he already did about INDYCAR, about racing, about the tracks that he raced at?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I think he loved it. He loved the INDYCAR racing, the way it is outside and on track. It's a lot more, I wouldn't say laid back, but a lot more open, the environment, as well. Everything is more open.

When you go from one race, like at Texas, the cars are going to be out there in the garages. We don't have those pit walls and stuff covering one team from another. Everything is open. You can walk over and almost look at other cars from another team's setup. Everything is a lot more open, a lot more kind of old school type of racing, which I think drivers really enjoy.

It can be 24 cars in the grid. Really for sure you have the big teams like Penske, Andretti, Ganassi, McLaren. Even like a smaller team can go out, if you have the right setup, right race strategy, you can go out and win the race.

To have that feeling every time you go into a race weekend knowing you have a real shot at winning a race or finishing on the podium, it's just a great feeling.

Q. Is he going to be in Texas for the race just watching and learning?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: I'm not sure if he'll be in Texas. I don't know. I didn't speak to him about Texas. I was there at St. Pete. I don't know if he's going to be in Texas. I know he's going to be probably in Indianapolis. He'll be there.

Q. Pietro, your relationship with Grosjean really probably goes back to that first F1 test you had in '18. What has been your relationship with him?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: No, it's been great. I mean, I consider him a good friend of mine because I've known him since, yeah, end of 2018. It's going to be three years now.

I went to a lot of F1 races in 2019. Last year as well, I went to almost all of them. So we've been friends over the years. It's a weird coincidence. After his accident, I drove the car in the last two races in F1. Now coincidentally we're sharing the same car in INDYCAR. It's the same number that I raced in Formula 1, which is 51. Such a weird coincidence. It's like we follow each other everywhere (smiling).

But he's a great friend. The motorhome, he's going to have a motorhome for the Indy GP. He called me up and said, Listen, for the weeks you're going to be there in Indianapolis, you can use my motorhome because I'm not going to be in the motorhome. I'm going to be using his motorhome. A huge favor he's doing for me.

He has this bad-ass 42-foot motorhome. He's going to have it for the Indy GP, then I'll have it for the Indianapolis 500 for two weeks. It's awesome he did that. He's a good guy.

THE MODERATOR: Good to have friends, Pietro?

PIETRO FITTIPALDI: Of course. Now you have to come by for a barbecue.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to leave it there. Our thanks both to Scott McLaughlin and Pietro Fittipaldi.

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