

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 14, 2021

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Will Power has joined us, the champion of the Big Machine Spiked Coolers Grand Prix. First win of the season, fifth now on the IMS road course, 40th career win as the NTT INDYCAR Series has now picked up their ninth different winner this season. 11 different winners is the modern day record. One other stat I'll throw your way: This is your sixth total win here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway between the oval and the road course, and that means now you tie Kyle Busch for most wins ever.

WILL POWER: Let's hope he doesn't win this weekend. (Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: Obviously the difference for you, having clean air. That was big for you today, wasn't it?

WILL POWER: It was, yeah. Once we got out in clean air, we were going. I don't think anyone had a better car than us.

So back markers certainly make it tough in this series, and it's a simple fix. You simply give those guys their lap back when it goes yellow and they won't fight you. You don't even have to mandate a blue. Jay? Jay Frye? Is he here?

THE MODERATOR: He's not here.

WILL POWER: I've mentioned that to him from time to time.

THE MODERATOR: It was almost a 10-second advantage there, but whittled away as you had --

WILL POWER: Hinchcliffe.

THE MODERATOR: Hinch in front of you, and Herta --

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think he needed some coverage for his sponsor, so he was like, I need to be last but leading.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously getting off the schneid, as they call it, getting a win this season, how big is this for you?

WILL POWER: Oh, man, it's a big relief. I think it's great for the team, especially the guys on my car. They've been working hard. They've been flawless this year. They've really done the job, and I haven't -- if we'd had that sort of performance in the pits and just prep and all that last year, we probably would have won a lot more races.

Yeah, very happy for those guys, and just happy to be in Victory Lane, man. You always start to wonder when is the next one coming. It always comes down to doing your homework, working hard and putting it together, staying focused.

THE MODERATOR: This 40th win, by the way, breaks a tie with Al Unser Sr. for fifth on the all-time NTT INDYCAR Series list.

Q. What is it like, obviously you said relieved to win, but to have that car on a day like day and just basically be in control, those are rare moments. What's it like in the cockpit, et cetera?

WILL POWER: It's just great when you get in that zone where you're just seeing the tenths grow behind you because you have it on your dash, you can see, and you just start getting a little nitpicking, like little tiny details and slowly pulling away. It's a great feeling. It's right in my zone, right in my wheelhouse when I'm like that. That was another day like that for me.

Yeah, love it. It's my life. Like I just love competing, but it's just winning is absolutely what makes me happy. I'm very moody when I haven't won for a while; just ask my wife.

Q. Seems like every time you do something really good, you carve a deeper niche into INDYCAR racing history. What does that mean to you?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, you look at the stats for sure when you're up there, and you're aware. I'm aware how far I am off Mario for all-time poles and I'm aware where I sit now in the all-time win list. I know that Michael Andretti is on 42, and that's a pretty -- Mario Andretti I think



I can catch on poles, which can be very tough these days, but man, I was very close to getting another one yesterday, and Michael is 42 on wins. Two heroes of mine and two absolute legends of the sport, and just blows my mind that I have a name close to them in the record books. Crazy. That was some serious name dropping, but my name is there. It's crazy. Who would have thought?

Q. With your off-track performance, you may be a duo with your brother in stand-up.

WILL POWER: No, stand-up is way harder than it looks. I may give it a go, but much harder than it looks.

Q. Race drivers have superstitions; when you see a late-race caution this year, did you have any superstitions today like what happened earlier, like Detroit and things?

WILL POWER: Oh, no, you just -- you certainly have those thoughts because it just blows my mind some of the things that can go wrong at such a critical time, but all I was thinking about is I'm getting this bloody restart; there's no way I'm giving this win up. So you know, I just focus hard on where I'm going to go and play a bit of a game to make sure I get a bit of a jump.

Q. After you won this race last year you were talking about how you want to drive well into your 40s, you feel like you're at your peak. You signed the contract extension right before the season starts and then things just kind of tailed off --.

WILL POWER: I know.

Q. You said you don't ever know when that next one is going to come, but did thoughts creep into your mind a little bit this year?

WILL POWER: It was such a weird slump for me because normally when I'm not winning it's not because of lack of pace, but there have been times this year where it's been a struggle to get the pace, the car right. I start digging a lot deeper and trying to understand like what is going on, why am I not fast? I couldn't just lose it all in a year.

So yeah, you just start going back to your old ways of doing stuff when you were super quick, and yeah, you can't leave anything on the table. Yep, weird slump. I have to say it's the first sort of slump I've had as far as performance has gone in my career, where -- I wouldn't say it's exactly a lack of pace. It was doing mistakes in qualifying, which is very unusual for me. I'd usually really put it together.

Last year I put it together the best I ever had putting laps together, like zero mistakes and was so good at just getting it done, and this year I've been on laps that will get me through each round and then I'll make a little mistake or something will go wrong, I'll get traffic. All that is so important to control, and I wasn't.

Q. So when you dug into it, what did you find? Was it just technique? Was it mental prep?

WILL POWER: Well, it's things -- it's a bit of mental prep and it's also last week when you have three laps to do your lap, and on a street course it can go yellow pretty easy, and that's exactly what happened. I was on a lap and I aborted it, and next lap I started which would have got me through, Josef went in the wall and went yellow. I should know that. I should know that you cannot ever be out of that top six. Every lap you've got to update yourself into the top six, and it's just not being on the game, on the ball. You should know that. It cost me a potential chance to be in the Fast Six.

It's little details. I came in here and it's like, I am not -- every lap counts, simply, until I feel comfortable again, and that's what I did.

Q. Speaking of last week, you had a couple of incidents in the race with teammates. Was it a difficult week from that perspective?

WILL POWER: Well, it was, yeah. Certainly the incident with McLaughlin was not good, and yeah, I didn't see Roger after the race a good hour there and said, I need to win a race before I speak to him again, so fortunately I came here and did that.

Q. Speculation was there was a chat with Roger after last week's race.

WILL POWER: I didn't see him, no. I kind of saw Tim and it was like, yeah, I've got to go.

Q. Will you go see Roger now?

WILL POWER: I explained myself the best I could to Tim what happened and then went to my bus and didn't come back. I wasn't avoiding him, I just didn't go see him.

Q. Obviously there's some frustration being behind Hinchcliffe during that time. How were you able to keep in check and under wraps and be able to focus on running?

WILL POWER: Well, I actually thought, the way I caught him, I thought, we could probably get past him no problem.

When I got to him and I saw he was using Push-to-Pass to keep me behind, I'm like, it's just insane that we have this in INDYCAR. Even the second-place guy doesn't like it, and the third-place guy because if I get past him then they've got to work to get past him. It just ruins races. I don't even think the guys that are trying to stay on the lead lap like it because they don't want to be a pain in the ass. They would like to get out of the way, and it's such a simple fix. Just bloody give them their lap back if it goes yellow. Give anyone who's a lap down their lap back. Give them one simple fix. It just blows my mind that we are at such a competitive series, you have nine different winners already, and no one consistently gets on pole, and it's just a different pole sitter every week, and yet you've got to come around and fight someone who's the last guy? I mean, there's no series in the world that does that.

And we've asked for this. They've got to do something. They need to change it. They should change it. There's a simple fix. It's just -- it pisses me off, man. Like just crazy that you're racing someone who's a lap down, it's insane, or going a lap down. It's too competitive to do that. Everyone works too hard, spends way too much money to be racing some guy that's a lap down that's having a bad day.

Anyway, it was a good day to win, though. (Laughter.) I just thought I'd get that point across when I can.

Q. When you came in the pit at the end, it also happened to be when James pitted, and for a moment it looked like you had a little bit of a --

WILL POWER: It was in second gear. I stalled and then I re-clutched and let go and fortunately it started.

Q. And I think we heard you over the radio say something like, oh, Christ, when you realized you were behind Hinch.

WILL POWER: Yeah, when he was pitting, that's when I'm like, we are going to be behind this dude. I was kind of relieved when the yellow came, like thank God he's gone, but yeah, I don't reckon he wants to do that. I don't reckon he'd like to do it, it's just the rule and he can fight to stay on the lead lap. It's just a bad rule.

Q. We tried this format last year, only no fans were allowed. This year fans are here and everybody is here. What do you think of it so far?

WILL POWER: Oh, I think it's cool to really the top-level motorsports in the U.S. to bring them together as a double-header. But the fans see both -- you see a lot of fans with NASCAR shirts on, a lot of fans of INDYCAR,

and they're all mixed in. I think it's really -- only Roger would come up with that. What a great idea.

Q. We've seen drivers, too, hang out in the garages, so they're as curious as maybe the fans are.

WILL POWER: Yeah, actually I saw -- that's the first time I've ever seen the NASCAR Penske Cup drivers in our transporter, and they were like, wow, this is amazing, all joined together, because their trucks all join together. We're like, we've got to upgrade. It's going to cost Roger money, this.

Q. An expensive weekend perhaps?

WILL POWER: It's like, yeah, we need what these guys have. They'll say, well, we can have what we have as long as you give us the paycheck you get.

Q. I wanted to ask about whether there was any difference in the Chevrolet and Honda performance today or whether the speed down the straight was more governed by which tires you were on and how much momentum you could take off that great kind of sweeping last corner.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think -- well, the tires made the biggest difference. I think the manufacturers are so close right now. You only see a difference when you've got some really slow corners where I think Honda has a little bit more torque, but as far as just power level, they're very close, very close. Yeah, you don't really see a performance difference in engines at all.

Q. And also, I don't want to say it was easy. Obviously it wasn't easy. But how easy was it for you to keep like 75 --

WILL POWER: (Answers phone.) It's Alex Rossi, sorry. Thanks, man.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I'm happy for you. I'm also glad I'm going home, so have fun with that.

WILL POWER: Please tell me you didn't have another bad race.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I finished fourth.

WILL POWER: I was like, man, if you had another bad race, I was going to be like -- I broke the spell, though, dude. I spoke the spell. You've got to win now. Hey, I've got to get back to press conference. Thanks, man.

Sorry, David. I had to answer. Rossi and I have been just



having the most horrible time, so I'm glad I broke the spell.

THE MODERATOR: Whatever you brought to the table you should take to Rossi next weekend.

WILL POWER: No, I want to win, so screw him.

THE MODERATOR: This is like the 800-pound gorilla off your shoulder; you finally got a win this year.

WILL POWER: Man, I am absolutely going hard when I go to sleep tonight, like just going to sleep. That's what I do. That's a big night for me. Definitely going back, good food, green tea with the peppermint in it, just go to sleep. It's an awesome night. How people do it differently, they go out and absolutely get slaughtered, but yeah. Conor Daly, Scott McLaughlin -- no.

Q. I think you should bring back the ice bath, Will.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I've got it there. I've got to get my bus driver to get it ready, man.

Q. To go back to the Hinch thing, I wanted to ask you sort of a post-race interpretation about that again because I know when you were on the radio and just after the race things can be quite heated and you get caught up in the moment, there's a lot of adrenaline going on. But do you think there was a predetermined move from Andretti to slow you down? Do you think it was all planned and that's what they were trying to do, or do you feel like it was happenstance, circumstance that that's just how the race played out?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, obviously Andretti wouldn't be telling him to get out of the way. I think if it was a Chevy engine, whoever -- if it was someone at Chevy, probably would. Hinch was just fast enough for me not to get close enough to kind of have a run when I did. He'd use Push-to-Pass.

You know, you can't blame the driver. It's the team that would be telling him stay on the lead lap in case it goes yellow, which it did, and it's just a really bad rule. I wish I could come on the radio and say, look, if Hinch lets me go, I will let him go when it goes yellow. He can have that position back. That's literally what you'd be doing is all they'd have to do is just give him the lap back. It would just stop it completely.

You have a gentlemen's agreement amongst drivers, hey, if the leader comes up on you, you let him go; you're getting your lap back anyway. And second place and third place.

Q. Will, looking forward to next week, how excited are you now to get this off your back and head to the next track? And two, does this win smooth over things between you and Roger?

WILL POWER: Smooth? I don't even know if there needs to be any smoothing. Like I said, I never spoke to him. Roger loves when you win, let me tell you. He loves when you win. It would hopefully -- yeah, Roger has been around so long, he's had teammates take each other out, he's had everything thrown at him over his 50-plus years in motorsports. I don't think it was a huge surprise to him. Yeah, just bad call from me to do that in that situation.

But yeah, teammates, we're all good. We have no problem. No problem. Scott -- we all talked, and yep, all good. I'll go see Roger after this, now I feel confident that I'll be okay. I'm just making a bit of a joke of it because it kind of is funny.

Q. I'm glad you can laugh about it.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I laugh about everything now. Once you're 40 you don't care. It's like, you're going to be dead soon anyway.

Q. Names like Mario and Michael, I think you're probably okay.

WILL POWER: Yeah, this 40 years to get to here went really fast, so I'm sure the next 20 to 40 is going to go even faster. Going to be dead soon, so it doesn't matter. Say what you want, do what you want. That's the best way.

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