

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: First up today is Scott McLaughlin. Welcome back for year two. I saw the other day you were shoveling snow.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Pretty excited about that it looked like.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I was busy as a one-legged cat in the sandbox doing all that sort of stuff, shoveling on the driveway. It was unbelievable.

No, it was a lot of fun. I can see why people get over the snow, that's for sure. We just had another dumping in North Carolina, which is pretty cool. Always cool waking up to it. Never really done that before in my life.

THE MODERATOR: What else in the first year of 'Scott Sees America' stuck out besides the racing?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, I think the biggest thing is everywhere you go in America, it almost feels like a different country. The west coast is different than the east coast. You have Wisconsin, they talk a little different. You go down in the south, they talk a little different compared to people in the north. It's cool. I really enjoy the cultures, stuff like that.

Had a lot of fun, especially in Wisconsin. I had a lot of fun with the cheese factory we went to. Cheese curds, really good.

THE MODERATOR: If I looked at your first season in INDYCAR, I would have been surprised most of your success would have been on ovals. Really took to it quickly. Was there something leading into the preparation that suggested to you ovals were going to be a strong suit for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was pretty bamboozled with that myself. The ovals are completely new to me. It's something that I didn't have any bad habits where the road

courses I thought potentially I had some bad habits from my time in the Supercar, how I wanted the car to feel versus how it needed to be to be fast was different than what I initially wanted.

It wasn't till the last few races, probably last six or seven, where I felt a lot stronger on the road courses and street courses, felt like I had a direction on where I wanted to go with the car.

But the biggest thing for me is overcoming qualifying, getting that right off. I've said that a number of times. I feel like my race pace is decent, especially on the road course. Just a matter of making it all happen when it counts in qualifying to get me a good spot for Sunday.

Look, I was surprised, but I love the ovals. I wish there were more. I think it's a cool form of racing. I think that's why INDYCAR is so special. It's so diverse, so different. You get a lot of disciplines you got to get ready. I enjoy that.

THE MODERATOR: The team goes from four cars to three cars. Puts a little extra spotlight on you to be concerned about. Have you noticed much change yet in how the operation works?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's interesting. I haven't been here with three cars. I've seen it, come and watched it occasionally over the years. Certainly feeling like it's a little bit more under control I guess you could say. A lot more people and more projects than it was, whereas it was a bit more spread out last year.

Certainly everyone has done a good job. Wishing Simon all the best at his new venture. We are excited to challenge ourselves again. Obviously we wanted to be better than we were last year as a team. We're working very hard to do that. Us three drivers are getting along very well. Hopefully we can make that happen.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, braking for me, I wasn't too bad. More worried or more focused on trying to feel



comfortable with the aero package, knowing exactly how much aero I want in the car.

I haven't driven a huge amount of aerodynamics in any race car before. For me I've been just trying to get used to that, find the balance right. The last six or seven races I felt like I actually had a pretty good balance there for myself.

Yeah, there's so much time in that little area you got to get right. If you don't quite get it, you just lose time like that. That's two or three rows. So competitive. It's just going to get more competitive. I have to make sure I'm onto it.

I worked hard with my engineers over the off-season just to understand the different packages that I tried throughout the season, what stuck out to be good, what stuck out to be bad. Trying to build a little toolbox when we go to the races again, go to tracks that I know now this year.

THE MODERATOR: Did you find anything relative to your training that needed to be different for year two that you were lacking in year one?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. I mean, my shoulders and stuff, trying to get them more stronger this off-season. Actually really gone hard on the weights, more harder than I've ever gone just beef up and be stronger to manhandle these cars. You really got to do it, especially on those hot laps in qualifying where you have sticky tires, the track is gripped up. You have to make sure you can hustle the car, especially at a place like Barber or even Detroit was quite difficult. Yeah, I've been working really hard at that. Then obviously the general fitness sort of side.

The heat of the car obviously got higher because of the windscreen. Everyone is battling with that. I think INDYCAR are doing a great job with apparatus to help us with cool suits, drink systems that can get better and better which hopefully can help us.

Q. Do you feel experience with the cars or familiarity with the tracks are more important for second year?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: To be honest, I think the tracks. I felt like I got a pretty good handle with the car halfway through the season. It's just going to tracks I didn't know. You basically waste a first session just getting used to them.

It's not an excuse, but that's just how it is. You come back at the end of the race, you're like I found out something in the race that if I did that in qualifying or practice, that's 1 or 2/10ths. 1 or 2/10ths in this field is huge.

I'm feeling excited. I don't know if it's going to change the world. It's certainly going to make me feel more comfortable heading to each track, each race knowing the lefts and the rights, what curbs to hit, what not to hit. It's going to be a lot of fun doing that.

Q. Did you feel as a rookie that you met your expectations or did you feel a little disappointed?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think in some ways, I'd lie if I wasn't disappointed a little bit. I think we showed some really good promise on the ovals and stuff. I felt really strong there, which surprised me a little bit. I probably exceeded my expectations on the ovals.

But the road courses, I would have loved to have qualified better. I was really content with my races. I felt really strong in the races. I did a few mistakes I probably shouldn't have made. On the qualifying side, especially that has been my strong suit in other categories for many years. Working very hard to get better.

Certainly I feel like I'm in a good spot right now head space-wise, where I am in my development to continue moving forward.

Q. You talked about some of the differences of this team moving from four cars. Even late in the season we heard Josef make a point to talk about how your contributions were really big. You were playing a pretty big role in some of those engineering meetings already. How much bigger of a role, you, Will and Josef will need to lean on you going into year two with the team scaled back?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That's a good question. I guess I've got to step up, absolutely, to make sure that I'm at the point where I know what I'm feeling in the car, what changes and developments we're making.

We've built a solid base there, but we're all in the same direction where we want to go. I feel like the best thing is we're on the same page, like I said.

I think it's going to be interesting. I feel like I'm a lot more confident in my feedback and how I'm giving the feedback back to the engineers, giving the feedback back to Josef and Will, which will certainly help us move forward.

I think around that Gateway time is when I felt I was really feeling comfortable with the race car, knew exactly what I was talking about a little bit there.

Yeah, I don't think I've lost any of that. Certainly feel like I'm going to, like I said, step up. I know I'm ready for that,

ready to move the team forward along with Josef and Will.

Q. Tim Cindric said he hoped you would be somewhere right around the top 10 in points at the end of your rookie season. You were fairly close. He would love to see you somewhere around the top fives with podiums and maybe a win in year two to judge your progress. Do you feel that's a reasonable expectation?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, for sure. I certainly believe I can do that. I feel like I've got a great team behind me. I feel like I'm in a good spot to really move my way forward.

I'm not really going to forecast wins and stuff like that. I certainly feel like I can be right there and challenge for them. I feel like I got the pace to do as well. Like I said, I have to sort my qualifying out. That's half my job done if I can qualify in that top eight. It's going to be a lot easier to move forward through that than starting 15th, 16th.

I'm in a good spot, like I said before, feeling-wise. Looking back at 2021, I think if I had finished some of the races where I probably should have, Indy was one that stuck out with the big points, the pit lane penalty really cost me a ton there. Everyone says everything, but I certainly felt we were going to be right inside the top 10 which would have completely changed my points structure, I probably would have made the top 10 by end of year. Ifs and maybes. I have to make sure I finish the races as I should and that will certainly help out positions as well.

Q. Based on some of the questions you've been asked already about your rookie season, do you feel you are judged a bit too harshly by media or fans?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, no. I'm fully content with how it was all judged and whatever. I think everyone was very nice to me. It's a big deal joining Penske, a big organization. Always a lot of pressure. I knew that was going to be the case.

Like I said, I feel like I'm on the right trajectory. As long as I'm happy and the team's happy, that's the main thing.

You can't really focus on that too much from my side. I feel like I'm in a good spot. We'll continue working forward. Yeah, there's no one that really puts more pressure on me than myself. I think I've always been like that throughout my career. That will certainly be the case moving forward as well.

Q. What about the fundamental driving aspects? Anything particular that you've worked on with the data you have access to, the off-season, to work on

some specific things you need to improve on?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, understanding the way that the track transitions. We've always been very quick in practice and right there or there about, the top eight, top six. You sort of hit qualifying and it sort of just goes down a hole a little bit. Wondering why that was.

We feel like we got a few ideas why that was. Potentially going the wrong way with some setup. What was very interesting, I went through the whole year with some engineers. I felt like we worked out -- there was a common trend going on. I felt like we were being a bit too aggressive on a few things that made the car really hard to drive when I needed to hit it at peak speed in qualifying.

It was nice to go through all that and certainly have a focus area. I feel like we're in a good understanding of where we need to be come practice to qualifying, especially St. Pete this year.

Q. What is crazier, Supercars or first race in INDYCAR?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: What was my favorite you said?

Q. Which was much crazy for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, much crazier (smiling).

No, not crazy, but just probably like starting my first oval was pretty crazy. Like I never really have driven in a huge pack before. Heading into turn one with 16 or 17 cars ahead of me in Texas was a pretty eye-opening experience, rocks and stuff hitting my windshield. I was hearing noises I never heard before.

Supercars, it was a good time. I felt like I was very comfortable with my surroundings there. Here it was a little bit different. But I wouldn't have it any other way. It was a thrill. That's what is so cool.

Q. What is your opinion about your countryman Liam Lawson? Do you think he should try to join INDYCAR in the future?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Liam Lawson?

Q. Yes.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I don't know. He's on a pretty good trajectory to Formula 1. He's probably New Zealand's next hopeful to be in the Formula 1 seat. I certainly hope he tries very hard to get all the way there.



Yeah, there's always -- regardless of where he wants to go, obviously his goals are Formula 1 at this point. I certainly wish him all the best. He's a great little driver, someone that New Zealand is very proud of.

Me and Scottie will look after things over here. If he wants to come to Indy one day and have a challenge, we'll welcome him with open arms I'm sure.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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