

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Alex Palou

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by second-place finisher Alex Palou, back in the NTT data Honda, his 12th career top 5, 10th career podium today, and finishing third, Will Power, the Verizon 5G Team Penske's 86th career podium. Will, you're now two shy of tying Bobby Unser and Al Unser Jr. for eighth on the all-time list.

WILL POWER: Podium list, wow. I didn't even know there was a list for that.

THE MODERATOR: There is a list for that.

WILL POWER: What about front row starts? My list of front row starts has got to be at the top.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get back to you on that.

THE MODERATOR: Let's start with the second-place finisher Alex Palou, you were charging there at the end, weren't you? How close was it for you?

ALEX PALOU: It was close. It was really, really close, but I don't think we had the pace he had today. Like he was on rails, and he knew where to go fast and where to obviously save some fuel at the end.

I was just there trying to make some pressure so hopefully he made a mistake or anything, but no, he was all good. Congrats to him. I'm super happy that he got his first win.

Yeah, I'm happier that we got our first podium of the year.

Q. You had some back markers coming up. Did you see that and did you think that would be an opportunity for you?

ALEX PALOU: No, at the end I have to pass them, as well, but yeah, I didn't really like that they were -- especially the last three laps, that they didn't let us pass. Yeah, you never want a race to be dictated by the slow cars.

WILL POWER: We keep telling INDYCAR, and they just keep making -- oh, no, they don't. Sorry, I forgot. (Laughter.)

ALEX PALOU: Wow.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to beat that drum today.

WILL POWER: I've been on this for 10 years. When every driver in the driver meeting says we need a blue flag rule, why isn't there one?

THE MODERATOR: I'll steer you towards this: Congratulations on your podium finish. What happened on the opening lap for you there? You lost a couple spots early on.

WILL POWER: Yeah, well, I started on blacks and I also got on the paint and it spun up when I went, which I wasn't -- I knew everyone would come back to me because the reds would go off, but unfortunately caught that yellow, so we were coming pretty good. I was pretty sure we'd be able to get past Scott, but unfortunately then I'd have to get on reds and try and maintain a reasonable pace, which I did in the second stint for a whole stint.

I think we could have been all right today with that strategy, but caught out with the yellow. Something else I've been on about for a decade is closing the pits under yellow because that would have been so nice to be able to pit when it went yellow there.

THE MODERATOR: Overall start to the season for you --

ALEX PALOU: He's not really happy today. What's going on?

WILL POWER: I'm happy with my result but I'm unhappy with the lack of things that get done.

THE MODERATOR: But a good start to the season for you.

WILL POWER: Oh, great start to the season. You've got to get into it, man. You've got to say how you feel. When you get to my age you'll just say how you feel. You won't be scared.



ALEX PALOU: He doesn't feel good today.

WILL POWER: Oh, I feel great, but I just like to point out the problems that could be fixed so easily within the series with just a little change.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, see what you have to look forward to when you get older?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I like to complain, as well, but --

WILL POWER: How old are you, man?

ALEX PALOU: 24.

WILL POWER: You're more than 15 years younger than me. Yeah, you're definitely going to change. I'm on my 17th year of INDYCAR.

ALEX PALOU: Oh, my God.

WILL POWER: It's long, man, so you've seen it all. So you have a pretty good grasp of what would make the racing better.

ALEX PALOU: Oh, my God, 17.

WILL POWER: So you try to tell them I've got a great idea, it's called blue flags when someone is a lap down and they're racing the leader that's battling for a win.

ALEX PALOU: Did you scream on the radio or no?

WILL POWER: No, I never say much on the radio. I said, oh, Jimmie looks like he's trying to get a bit of coverage here. I had a bit of fun with it. It's a good battle between him and I, I hope the TV is getting that sponsor for him.

Q. Alex, to win to make a podium, you have to have a certain amount of luck, but today it seemed like you did a perfect job, 100 percent it was a job well executed. Was it like this, or did you have a little bit of luck any time?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think today was a really good day for the No. 10 car. Since I started I was able to get some guys at the start and then on Turn 3 or Turn 4, as well. I was pretty happy. The crew did an amazing job during the pit stops, so that's luck, as well. I'm not doing anything there. The boys did a really good job during the preseason to try and be good as they were and ready today.

Yeah, the rest of the race, yeah, it was a good race. It was a great day. We didn't have anything -- well, yeah, we

didn't have any data, so I don't think that the team was able to see the fuel we had. I was not able to see the fuel I was hitting, so that makes it a bit hard, but anyway, I think we have enough fuel --

WILL POWER: You had no number?

ALEX PALOU: No, no number. But I think I have enough fuel now for the next race, also.

Q. How big of a result is it for both of you in terms of the momentum going forward given that there's a bit of a break before the next race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I'm really, really happy to start out this way. When I think about the day, just a really, really solid day for us. Got that yellow and then made the reds last in that middle stint. To finish on the podium, I was really, really happy with that. I didn't expect -- I expected us to be maybe in the top 10 after all of that. Great result. Happy with my performance. I couldn't have done any more, and also with the team, we did everything that we could in the situation that we had. Really nice day and a great start to the season.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, me too. I think it's always good to start with a great result. If it doesn't come, it's okay. There's a lot of races. But obviously it helps if you can get a good result and a podium is an awesome result to start the season.

Yeah, we have three weeks now to prepare and get ready for Texas, so yeah, should be a good season now.

Q. Will, you've obviously been coming here for a while. What did you think of the atmosphere, especially after the last couple years?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was great to see such a big crowd, which I expect at a lot of races now that everything is open, especially the Indy 500s. I think people have been locked up and got a real feel for what it's like not to be able to socialize, and it's just no fun. I think everyone is enjoying themselves, and it's great to see fans again, great to do autographs and an autograph session and see full stands. Yep, really, really cool.

Q. Just wanted to see if you could give us an update on the street course performance of Ganassi at the moment. I know it's been a long weekend for you guys and when you came off the truck you weren't particularly happy with where you were at, so does the performance today point to improvements in that sense or do you think you have work to do on the setup?

ALEX PALOU: Yes and no. I think everybody saw how we started the weekend. We started struggling, but I think everybody saw, as well, how we were able to come back and just improve our car and our performance overall. I still think that our qualifying pace is not there yet, like suddenly today in the warmup we were up there where we thought we would have been on qualifying. But yeah, we struggled to get one lap, especially on street courses, but we're getting there. I think last year we got 17th here as a result and had no real pace, so today we had pace and also scored a podium.

Pretty happy. We're making steps in the right direction, but obviously we cannot make a huge change from one day to the other that's going to completely change their performance. But yeah, we're moving forward, and we're proving that it's working.

Q. Alex, you could get up to Scott on the closing laps, but you could feel him but you couldn't really catch him. How frustrating is that?

ALEX PALOU: It's a bit frustrating but it's not frustrating too much. I prefer when -- yeah, I'm up there instead of him going. There was one time where he just pulled a gap of like three seconds and I was like, oh, man, I'm pushing, and I didn't have anything. But I was saving fuel, he was not at that moment, and at the end, yeah, I was trying, and I was able to stay there.

But the places where he and the car was good, it was the places that avoided him to have any issues on overtaking spots. Yeah, a bit frustrating to be that close, but still, solid result.

Q. I know the four drivers on your team, you're the only one who had a decent finish. Jimmie's reds dropped off really bad, so that put him back --

WILL POWER: Jimmie was P3 -- oh, hang on, no, he was racing me -- oh, he was a lap down, sorry. I thought he was -- the way he was racing I thought it was for the podium.

ALEX PALOU: The question is for me.

WILL POWER: Sorry, I just thought he had it wrong.

ALEX PALOU: Poor Jimmie, man. He's my man.

Q. So if I can try to remember the question I asked five minutes ago -- you had a good finish, Scott had a bad strategy, says I don't even know why they put him on that strategy; Marcus got penalized; Jimmie had the

red tires. What do you think happened across the board?

ALEX PALOU: I don't know, so I didn't know that Marcus had some issues. I know that we all started really good at the beginning. I think we were all in the top 7, so I was like, man, this is going to be a great race, and then suddenly Scott went for the alternate strategy because I think a lot of people including me thought that the reds were not going to last a full stint. It was the right strategy at the moment.

Yeah, at the end the reds lasted pretty much, yeah, and then the strategy changed. Yeah, I think overall -- did we get three cars in the top 10 or close to it? I think, yeah, maybe it's not a great, great result, but it's a good result.

Q. Will, two Team Penske cars on the podium, including the winner. You said a couple of weeks ago how important it is to get off to a fast start, so here's your fast start. Elaborate.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was a really good day. I think we had a really fast car. The yellow was unfortunate, but still to get back to third, I was really happy with it. I think anytime you're on the podium, anytime you have a top 5 that's not the day you're going to look back and go, oh, that cost me the championship. If you can keep rattling off those top 5s you're going to be in the game. Definitely happy with the result.

Q. Will, you were joking earlier about how long you've been doing this. What's it been like watching the influx of young talent having so much success the last couple of years?

WILL POWER: It's great, man. It really is. In the years I've been in this series it's the toughest it's ever been, the quality of the teams and the drivers are higher than it's ever been, and yeah, just so many good young drivers. You can tell that the field quality is really high because there's not many yellows, even in practice. Even at Sebring we hardly had any yellows when we had the one test.

Just the level of talent and quality of teams is at -- it's such a good product. We've just got to get it out to the world. It's the best open-wheel racing product in the world.

Q. Will and Alex but mostly for Will, you're clearly in a very good mood. Is this a mental change coming into the season, or you're just jacked up with today's race?

WILL POWER: Oh, no, I'm really happy with the race. I actually am more relaxed. I just find myself more relaxed the older I've got. I never really swear on the radio or get

mad in the car. I am very sarcastic in these press conferences for fun because my brother is a comedian and we've spent our whole life doing this, like just saying things sarcastically just in the family. I hope no one takes it too badly.

But they really should do something about the blue flags. (Laughter.) We're going to start paying like Chevy drivers to play the same game --

ALEX PALOU: Oh, again? I thought that was over.

WILL POWER: Did it happen? Oh, yes, I feel better now. I thought it was just the Honda guys.

Q. Alex, you're clearly now that you're going into your third year you're feeling at home here?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah --

Q. I would say a couple years ago you wouldn't have interacted as much with a jovial Will Power like this?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's amazing. I'm happy. I mean, Will Power.

WILL POWER: I'm trying to make you happy.

ALEX PALOU: I'm always happy.

WILL POWER: I want you to be comfortable in this series but not too comfortable. I don't want you to win anymore. It's a bit of a problem.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I'm happy.

Q. Will, great to see a Penske 1-3 on the podium. How much work during the off-season has been done to achieve that?

WILL POWER: A lot. A lot. We had one of our worst seasons last year and a very disappointing Indy 500. There's been a lot of reflection and development to try and understand what that was and definitely have turned up with better cars. There's no question. Definitely different philosophy and right in the window, and it's showing on the track. Like from the moment I was on track on Friday, the car was fast, and really haven't changed much at all.

Q. Does it make a difference, the fact that you're now a three-car team as opposed to being a four-car team? Has that impacted on it at all?

WILL POWER: No, not really. We got some of the guys from that fourth car, which probably added a little bit of

quality to the pit crews, but the pit crews were already pretty solid. Pit stops were all good.

Not really. Penske can comfortably run four cars and not really take away from anything. It's just a little more quiet in the engineering office now.

Q. Alex, you're starting to be referred to here as Scott Dixon 2.0, crashed in practice, started 10th, and there you are finishing second, challenging for the win. What's your response to all that?

ALEX PALOU: There's only one Scott Dixon, so yeah, we're not even close to that.

WILL POWER: Put the pressure on him, man. Put the pressure on.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was great. It was a great weekend. We started struggling a lot. Obviously my little contact with the wall in practice 2 didn't help at all, but the crew did an amazing job once again like this did last year during the Indy 500 to put a car back together before qualifying, and a fast car, as well. So we had no issues. We went out and started in the top 10 today, and we were able to just attack and pass cars one by one with amazing pit stops.

Yeah, we'll try and keep it going. It was a great day. We know that not every day it's going to be like today, but hopefully we'll have also easier weekends.

Q. I wasn't sure if I heard it right, Alex, but were you getting fuel mileage numbers?

ALEX PALOU: No.

Q. Will, you had mentioned getting paint on the tire at the start and a few other things, but was your car struggling at all with fuel loads at the start of both stints? It didn't seem like you had the car that you did later on in the stints or was it a case of trying to manage the tires?

WILL POWER: Yeah, so I started on black tires, the harder compound. The guys in front were on reds, so they were quicker for about five or six laps. I was getting a big fuel number for those left just knowing that those reds were going to come back to me, the cars in front, so I got some fuel and waited for them to go off a bit, then I went, passed a couple of cars and started to use my pace later in the stint.

It was a pretty strategic race really. We used the pace when we had it and saved fuel when we were in other

situations. Yeah, that's why I dropped back.

Q. Will, you started last year with a second at Barber, obviously starting this year off again strong. What do you need to do to parlay this into a championship unlike last year?

WILL POWER: Finish really well in the double points race at Indy like we didn't last year, and have my car start when I'm leading in Detroit. That group of points right there probably would have put me in the game. So there's a big chunk right there.

But honestly, it's those days that really got us. Like we were in -- we were going to be a top 5 at Indy and then the brakes went to the floor and I had no brakes and then couldn't pit really, and then in Detroit obviously the thing didn't start.

But those little gremlins, those little things are the things we look back as things that really cost us, kind of things out of my control, but I also reflect and look at where I can be better, as well. If that all comes together, I really believe we can win the championship and be right there, at least a contender right until the end.

Q. Alex, this is your best finish on a street course. How do you feel like you've improved on street courses over the years, and what kind of got you to getting to second on a street course where have you struggled on these previously?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I'm really, really happy about that. Street courses, I think when I first joined INDYCAR, I just did like three races on street courses before joining INDYCAR, so I think it's just experience and confidence. Yeah, getting more confidence every time, and hopefully we can keep on scoring good results on street courses.

THE MODERATOR: Alex Palou, Will Power, you guys are free to go. Best of luck the rest of the season.

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