

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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### Scott McLaughlin

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Scott McLaughlin, career win No. 1 in just his 18th career start in the INDYCAR Series, the second straight year this race has been won from pole, fourth overall. We added it all up, 223 INDYCAR Series wins for Team Penske. And of all the drivers that have won a race in this series, you are the 295th different one to do so. A quick shout out, it's Chevrolet's 96th victory since the return to the series in 2012.

You've had some time to kind of reflect on all this. What do you make of career victory No. 1, Scott?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, man, just unexpected, I think. I felt like -- you back yourself, but in our pre-event we said top 7, if we can come out of here with a solid top 7. Obviously the goal was changed last night, but it was just phenomenal the way the car rolled out of the truck and I felt like I could really do what I wanted to do with the car from the get-go.

What that does for confidence as a race driver is something that just feels very special. I knew halfway through that race that it was somewhat -- a bad yellow or something was really going to affect us. We knew that we were going to fight there the whole way, and I just had to keep calm and control the race myself, and I felt like we did that until the back markers made it pretty exciting, which would have been great for everybody at home but not for me.

But it was just a phenomenal weekend. Perseverance. You just don't give up. You don't doubt yourself. I knew I could do it. Last night I had a great sleep because I just said to myself, I've done this before, let's just -- I did it with a roof over my head. Now it's just a matter of just feeling it and seeing what I had today.

Look, I had a great start, got into a rhythm and away we went. I'm very proud, great for Dex Imaging. It's their home race. Team Chevy gave us awesome fuel mileage and drivability, as we've said all weekend.

Yeah, I just ended up on my ass at the podium, but that's okay. Felt a little roly-poly, but anyway, that wasn't part of the act.

I'll never forget it, man.

THE MODERATOR: You need to work on dismount.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I couldn't believe it, I jumped, no shit, and my legs just were jelly, bro, and when I hit the ground, I'm like, I'm done. I tried to make it as delicate as I could, and I just looked like an idiot. I looked like a wombat, man. It was bad. You guys hear of wombats? Or a kiwi. Kiwis don't fly, that's why they fall over when they come down from the sky. That's what we did just then.

THE MODERATOR: We saw you FaceTime your parents --

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, that was awesome.

THE MODERATOR: How emotional is all this?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, it's hard. You're quite emotional on the way in, but mom and dad always listen to the radio on the INDYCAR app. You guys can get that; it's a great thing from the INDYCAR people and NTT.

No, it's certainly -- yeah, they always listen. I gave them a shout-out on the way in, and then Karly, my wife, she always gets them on FaceTime whenever we have a good result and they're not there. Yeah, we had a good chat. Mom and dad were crying. My dad had his PPG shirt on. He's like, that's all I got; I don't have a Dex shirt. I'm like, it'll come. I'll send it to you soon. It'll get there in six months.

Yeah, it's tremendous. I can't wait, man. They're going to come over in May. They haven't seen me in INDYCAR at all ever. They've only seen me on TV and the onboard videos I send back. Mom can't watch. Mom always has a wine and dad just sits there and yells at the TV.

Yeah, very excited for them to come over. It's going to be a very different perspective.



THE MODERATOR: When is the last time you've seen your parents?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: January 2020. And my sister was a little bit better. We saw each other October 2020, but can't wait to have her here, as well. She looks after all my media. I bet she's going to be crazy down under.

Yeah, I miss them dearly. My mom and dad, they're the ones that got me here and made me believe in myself. My mom and dad have been infatuated with the USA for many years, and I guess that put the love of the USA and the want to come over here to the big leagues when I was a young kid, even way before my Supercars success.

Then obviously I met just a guy named Roger Penske and we kicked it off. I'm tremendously grateful for the position my mom and dad put me in and the position Roger and Tim Cindric put me in.

**Q. How was it to control that race? It's something that's so familiar to you from Supercars but obviously you've come to a different championship and things are a lot different here. Did it feel natural to be able to control that race or was it a lot more difficult than it looked?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The last lap and then when we got put in the traffic didn't feel that natural because it doesn't really happen -- we have different yellow procedures and stuff. I felt like at the start I was like, oh, this feels like how it used to not long ago. But it was very nice at the start being able to control my pace, especially against Herta who was very quick, and I knew I had his pace on the reds. It was just a matter of hitting my fuel number, which we were doing from the start of the race.

Yeah, I mean, we just got into a rhythm, and then even when the yellow flag came out and we were back in the traffic there, it was just about me just knowing that hopefully if there's no yellows we were on the preferred strategy, which we were, and it was about bringing it home.

For me it's just all about just keeping calm, particularly if you're the leader, just not making any rash decisions, make a move if you can make it, but if not, just relax and count the laps down.

**Q. You spoke about St. Petersburg being your third INDYCAR race, which I imagine might have been a big help over the course of the weekend, but what does this say about your ability to go to the tracks you've been to once before, and do you think you can carry this form forward?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think the way that I've worked with Ben Bretzman, my new engineer, I think we can really start working on what we need. We know what we want from a street circuit car, which we just showed that it's going to be pretty good, so I'm excited for Long Beach. I'm heading back there for the second time.

But I'm not kidding myself; I could quite easily be 20th next round. This is what INDYCAR is all about. This is why everyone loves it, why it's becoming the world's most competitive motorsport series. Proud to be a part of it, but it's all about now -- I'll celebrate this, I'll have a few beers, don't you worry about that, but I'll make sure that I get back on the horse, actually back on the simulator on Wednesday and got to get ready for Texas and then get ready for what's ahead at Long Beach and a few things. It's going to be hard, but I'm there.

**Q. Where does this rank in terms of your career highlights? Obviously I know you've been super successful in Australia.**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, I think this is top-3 moment of my life. I'm not going to rank them, but they are Bathurst -- no, I can't say that because my wife would be mad. No, top four. My wedding, my marriage; Bathurst 1000 victory; my first championship in Supercars; and then my first victory in INDYCAR. To win on both sides of the world is pretty cool. My phone is absolutely going ballistic in my pocket right now, and I can't wait to respond to a lot of the messages.

**Q. In terms of the momentum going forward, how exciting is it to have won your first race?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, it's a great monkey off the back and it puts us -- a tremendous confidence booster as a team, but like I said, we're not kidding ourselves. We've got to keep working, keep working harder because all the teams are going to come back at us strong. You look at Ganassi, they're probably not amazing in qualifying but they were very fast in the race today and pushed me to no end and passed a few cars.

Yeah, I'm not kidding myself. Just keep pushing on and we'll be okay.

**Q. The shoe, were you planning on doing that, or was that the fans' request?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, I saw the Australians, and I did one on the Bathurst 1000 podium, so I'm like, oh, stuff it, I'll give it a go. And I had beer this time, so it was nice.

**Q. I know you had no one in your family from over**



**there, but Karly was telling me about there's a Supercars mechanic that you have here. Could you tell me his name, his background? Was he here just to see you or was he here to race?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No he's the same sort of thing, a guy named James, he was my No. 2 mechanic for the whole time when I was in Supercars -- sorry, not the whole time but at DJR Team Penske, so we won a lot of things together, but he's here living in the States now, chasing his dream of potentially trying some international races and that sort of stuff, so he's got his Visa, he's ready to go. He's just getting interviews and whatnot. But he's a great mechanic and someone that -- he's a big -- like we get along very well. He had my tee shirt on today. He's a big -- we went through some highs and lows, man, me and that guy and that whole team. It was very cool.

He's the first Australian I've seen since October of 2020, so it was very cool to catch up with some of those boys.

**Q. Like any good Penske driver, externally we don't see the frustration and how difficult it is, but Karly said it was really tough on you last year and I know you said -- I can't remember the exact quote, but you said Roger told you something about marathon, not a sprint, this is just part of the story. Could you expand what the last year was like for you?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I came over three times. I had won straight back-to-back championships, and I know I'm a rookie and I wasn't kidding myself, but at the same time it's hard to go from the mindset of, okay, win every week and that's all that matters, nothing less, to going, hey, I'd love a top 15. I don't work like that. I'm a competitive bloke. I want to win. I want to get poles. I want to dominate races and not even worry about things.

It definitely took -- I did that for four years, and then coming here and was basically -- it just mucks with your head, and you've got to be realistic about things, and I put a lot of pressure on myself, like why isn't this happening, why am I sucking in qualifying when I'm good? I've done that before, I've proved that.

It's a mind game, man, and you've got to be on top of it. You've got to just believe in yourself.

Like I said, Karly has been my absolute rock with that. She's put the belief in me. I would be nothing without her.

Definitely some hard times, but she's pulled my head in, Roger's pulled my head in, and we just got on with it. Speaking pretty candid, it's just how it is. As a professional sportsman you go through highs and lows. You're getting

paid good money and you're running 15th, it's not good. For me it's not good. I drive for the biggest motorsport team in the world. For me it wasn't good.

But I feel like today, this weekend, we proved that hard work, perseverance, you can get there, and I felt very proud of that.

**Q. I understand you don't fly back until tomorrow, so there going to be a big party somewhere tonight?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, you know it. Yeah. We'll keep a lid on it, but we'll have fun.

**Q. Scott, you didn't get it easy from Alex here, you had to really fight for it. Does that make this win a little bit more special knowing that you've had to really fight someone for it instead of winning by like 25 seconds?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, at the start of the race I felt like I had everything. I led the start, first hung on to 1 leading the start, had to fight off Herta, he was on my outside there, and geez, it was close with me and Palou -- was it, coming out of pits? It was close.

I had all sorts of things going, caution, period, pit stop, then it was close with me and Will there, and then the battle with Palou saving fuel in the middle of the pack. I felt like we had everything, and then Alex at the end pushing me really hard. The guy in front of me backing up and didn't really have the pace, but it's hard with the dirty air to make moves. I just wanted to be safe.

But yeah, it was nice. I had everything in that race, and it definitely showed what I've learnt in the last year.

**Q. Your first Supercars win was at Pukekohe?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, close.

**Q. What can you compare about how your first win there was or in Supercars was compared to your first win here? Similarities, differences?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Well, Pukekohe, I lived 15 minutes from that track, so it's a little bit different, so I had a lot of friends and family. That was crazy. But sort of went in there one day, not knowing -- no one knew who I was and the next day I had to have security come in and help me get out. It was crazy.

And today it's the same, like I'm very -- it's just surreal, man. There's no comparison, but at the same time the relief and the -- I guess the belief that you have in yourself, it just feels like it's just surreal. I have no words, man. It's

crazy. Same sort of feeling, not at home, fun.

**Q. This is a very weird question, but since you have won I think you can answer this. It is very difficult for us to pronounce your name, McLaughlin --**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's hard in USA, too.

**Q. We call you a very beautiful city in Spain that is called Malaga, Malagita. So we call you Malagita. So the question is can you say hello Malagita?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It sounds pretty good. Hello, Malagita.

**Q. Looking ahead, Texas is next up. Texas was a great Shootout with Dixon there last year, obviously now was a fantastic result over the weekend. Is that going to put any other pressure on you to have another good result at Texas or it's just business as normal now with the new engineer around you and stuff, as well?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, business as normal. Thankful that we're going to have a test day before then, too, at Texas. We'll be able to fine-tune some things before we go there. We're going to have a little bit of a different downforce package from INDYCAR, as well, so will be interesting.

Yeah, I'm fully prepped, like I said. If I'm not on the pole I'm going to start 20th, and I don't want that to happen, so I'm going to work hard. It's business as usual. It's the first race; I'm not getting ahead of myself. It's just head down, bum up, and make it happen.

**Q. Just finally as a part of that, obviously the Kiwi contingent is very set to travel in the coming months when our border restrictions ease and the influx of New Zealand fans probably around the month of May. What does that mean to you emotionally if you see a bunch of New Zealand flags say in the grandstands or around the paddock at Indy or at any other tracks across the season?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, it's huge. It makes me want to run up in front more and make the trip worthwhile, alongside Scotty. We know Scotty is always going to be there.

Look, I really appreciate all the support that I've had. My phone has been going crazy, my Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, you name it, has been going crazy. Kiwis are a proud bunch and we love being the underdog, and I felt a little bit like that. I feel like we're a little bit of the underdog

still at the moment, regardless of this win. I feel like we can have a lot of fun this season, see what we've got, and hopefully when I see the Kiwis it's going to be awesome and even the Australians, too.

**Q. The last three years the winner of the season opener has gone on to win the championship. Do you think you're the championship favorite now?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. Well, I mean, in my head I am.

You know, let's keep it low key. Yeah. Let's be the underdog for a little bit longer.

**Q. Just in general, is that a lot of pressure? Are you able to kind of put that off to the side and not really think about that and just do your job?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. For me INDYCAR -- what won the championship last year was a 7.1 average race result. For me it's just I want to finish top 10 every race, top 8 every race, and if I can do that, I know I'm going to be there or thereabouts towards the end of the season. When we can win races like we did today, that's exactly what we've got to do. We've got to capitalize on those, but like I said, we've got to just not rest on this one win, like this is all about just get going and let's keep the momentum up, and regardless when we've got a fourth-place car, we take a fourth place; when we've got a tenth-place, we take the tenth. When we can win a race, we capitalize. That's the plan this year.

**Q. Scott, you kind of touched on this a bit, but the out lap of your final stint appeared pretty critical to collect this win. Then you had traffic at the end and Palou closing in on you. Was this the hardest final stint of your racing career?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, the Bathurst 1000 was pretty hard, but this was a lot of what I learnt in the last year, what in and out laps, being comfortable on cold tires, studying my anti-roll bars, so I felt comfortable on the newer tires and then resetting, using my Push-to-Pass.

I felt like last year really led me up to this moment. I wouldn't say it was the hardest lap of my career or hardest stint, but it was probably very up and down. Probably the most up-and-down stint I've had in a race in my career.

**Q. You mentioned your family there and their passion for racing. Do you think we'll see any more viral videos surface of your dad yelling at the TV?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I asked mom if she had got it. She

said she was jumping up and down, too, but maybe. I can't remember if they were watching with anyone. So it would be funny -- probably won't be able to post it on social because it'll be swear words and stuff.

**Q. I wanted to ask about how much of a dilemma there was before the start of the races to how much -- whether you should run reds or blacks, especially when you saw Will going to blacks, or was that a team thing, to just split your strategy?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, I said I wanted to start on the reds and we decided that as a group decision, and thankfully it was the right call because everyone else around me did. I just felt like I'd be more -- running into Turn 1 the first time, most amount of grip, being able to take the lead and just use the clean air. We had the best opportunity to do that, so get those out of the way, see how they hold on, which mine were holding on pretty good. I actually felt better on the red tire than I did the black tire. Yeah, I think we could have easily done the 30-odd laps if we didn't have that yellow, and then, yeah, just soldiered on from there.

**Q. In that final stint, Palou was mentioning that when he was behind you, you were kind of like saving fuel at exactly the right spots and was able to go quick so that he couldn't actually -- in the parts where he could pass you. Was that something you had planned a long time ago or was it kind of like you were making decisions on the fly?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, I just got told the number that I had to hit, but I also had practice -- that's everything we practiced in the simulator, as well. Like thousands and thousands of laps on the simulator just getting ready for that moment and knowing that it's potentially going to be a two-stop race. We know how many laps the race is going to be and what our mileage is like, so it's about preparing for that, and felt really prepared and knew exactly what I needed to do, and we spent this morning the whole warm-up basically focused on in and out lap starts, fuel saving, so I knew exactly what I had and what I needed to do. Yeah, it's a good feeling when you can control a race like that.

**Q. We saw you sliding around quite a bit. Were there quite a lot of marbles on the track by the end there, just in that last few laps with Palou right behind you? There was a couple of times where I thought, oh, my God, the tail of his car is going to hit the wall.**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think the slides were induced by stress. Yeah, honestly the car was pretty good, but when you're in dirty air and your car changes with the turbulent

air and stuff, it's very different, and that's another thing just leading the race, it's very different here with the lap traffic compared to any other series in the world, so just trying to judge all that and get that right.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Scott McLaughlin.

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