

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, March 19, 2022

**Scott McLaughlin**

**Felix Rosenqvist**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We are joined by the front row -- well, half of the front row, anyway, for tomorrow's XPEL 375, soon to be joined by Felix Rosenqvist. Joined right now by Scott McLaughlin, suddenly on a roll now after a win a couple of weeks ago at St. Pete and now getting it done once again on the oval here at Texas Motor Speedway. Just your general thoughts about qualifying?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, thank you. It's certainly good to be on the XPEL card and to be on the front row is certainly job security me. Certainly feel pretty feel strong in race trim and qual trim, and our test day last week really helped us hone in on some of the balance that we wanted, but Felix's lap was really strong. From the outside I knew that was going to be pretty tough, but to be close to him and not far off it was a testament to us and how we were able to react to the temperatures and a few other things. Pretty happy just to put a time on the board.

THE MODERATOR: The difference being 3 thousandths of a second.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yes.

THE MODERATOR: You wonder what you could have done out there?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, man, should have gone for a wee. (Laughing). You never know. No, sorry. I shouldn't say that. That's not very Penske.

No, I certainly felt I had a little bit of scrub off turn one and two on that last lap, and that potentially -- it may have cost me a little bit, scrubbed a little bit of speed there. I knew it, so on three and four I was like, oh, I'm making a little bit of a weight jack adjustment and bars, but then I looked at the score and I was, like, 209.9 at the end. That might not be enough, and then sure enough they said P2. Like I said, great job for Team Chevy to have a front row. I think it's three in the top four, so it's leaps and bounds, and we're

getting ready for Indy now.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by some virtually. If you don't mind those that are on the zoom, go ahead and you can type in those questions into the chat, and we will attempt to pass those along to Scott and Felix eventually. For those of you in person, let's go ahead and begin with Q & A.

**Q. Scott, for this front row right after you had the great start to the season at St. Pete, how much of this is really keeping the momentum going, and how important is the momentum to continue to fight for the championship?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I know very well how much momentum is helpful towards a championship charge, and it's all about consistency. I said to you guys at St. Pete that a top seven every race is really our goal. I think it's going to be good for our points and everything like that, but knowing that we had a great car coming here, I knew that we could keep that momentum, so it helps coming to track set. Now I know, and now I know how we're going to react. Look, the points are tomorrow, so we have to make sure we have a clean race and be solid. I feel like we've got a race car that can compete for the race tomorrow.

**Q. Scott, you've got three Chevies in the top four there with Felix on pole and Power in fourth. How competitive do you think Chevy will be tomorrow in the race?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Hopefully decent. Who knows? I think it's going to be interesting how the second groove rubbers in and where the runs come from, but I think certainly you can't go any better. Everyone has got it on full steam for qualifying. Everything is turned up, so that's a great testament to Chevy and a great sort of warm-up for the next time we qualify at that speed is Indy, so it puts a little bit of confidence there for everyone to make sure that there's been good changes in the offseason. I know they've been working their tails off, so we'll see what we've got on the race. Like I said, it's going to be interesting how the draft works and lots of stuff. We'll find out this afternoon how it is as well. I'm excited. I love racing here at Texas. Such a good place, so I think it's going to be interesting.

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**Q. Scott, there's always this age-old debate of momentum actually exists in motor sports. Some drivers say yes; some drivers say no. Do you believe in it, and have you sensed a difference in the team since the St. Pete win?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think there's momentum and also self-belief and believing that you guys can do it as a squad, guys and girls. I think the Car 3 team, before we went to St. Pete we believed we could pop out a result here and there and be strong, but the way that St. Pete went for us was fantastic. Certainly when you have that confidence early, it's a fantastic thing, but now it's all about keeping that going, and, yeah, I believe the momentum is that. The momentum, you've got to -- even if we did qualify a little bit further down today, I still think we would have rolled into tomorrow's race feeling pretty good.

It's a good vibe on the team, and I put that down to Benny Bretzman. He is such a great team leader, great for the camaraderie between the guys and girls on the team. He puts a lot of confidence in me and my ability. That certainly is a momentum-builder for all, for sure.

**Q. Building off of that, this was your best track in terms of results last year, so could you have picked a better place to go next after St. Pete, the place where you finished in second last year?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's nice, certainly, and to roll out of qualifying the last car where the track is the best and all that kind of stuff. That helps, but for me I'm just kind of each track, I know what I did last year, but at the same time this is a new downforce package, that kind of stuff. I am taking it in that I have two race experiences here that can really bode me well for when I head out tomorrow.

For instance, like going into practice today, last week we had five cars on track, and it was a bit busy, and then today we had 27, and it was madness. It was like L.A. traffic. It was crazy out there. Certainly for me as a rookie last year I probably would have flipped out a little bit going, well, this is crazy, but today I felt pretty comfortable and just picked my spots and got going.

**Q. Scott, two questions ago you said, "I love racing here," and you were second in your debut here, and it makes no sense at all that you would have never raced an oval and you ran well and you love it. Why? How does that happen?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think I just -- I don't know. I just enjoy ovals. I enjoy the challenge. It's very intricate. You have to think about all parts of the corner. There's almost

eight or ten parts of the corner that you have to really think about to give feedback for the engineer. We took turns one, two, three, four, but for me I break it up into almost 20 parts throughout the track, and I enjoy that.

I guess one thing as well last year for me was I had bad habits on the road course, straight course that I had to iron out, and ovals I could come and just be brand new. I just learned off Will and Josef and Simon. I just copied what they were doing and found my own way, and I'm really enjoying it, and I just love the racing.

INDYCAR is oval racing. I feel like we have to have ovals. I enjoy it. It's part of our DNA, and that's why I've come to America for INDYCAR racing for ovals.

**Q. Talked to Roger briefly this morning, and once again he said how special he thinks you are. There's a sentiment that you can get hot and just roll off a bunch of wins or great finishes. Do you ever have a feeling when you know that that's about to happen for you?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, but like I said, it's self-belief. You just go out and wheel the thing and see what you've got. I feel comfortable with what I've got, and I put myself down that I can be as good as anyone in this series, and that's why I've come here to challenge myself. Yeah, confidence is a big thing, and I lost a little bit of that last year, and it's nice to get some of that back, but we'll see what we've got tomorrow. Yeah, all good.

**Q. You were mentioning your love for racing here at Texas and with a lot of the talking being on if this race will be on the schedule after this season, how do you place that? How important is Texas Motor Speedway and this track on the INDYCAR schedule, in your opinion?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I had my best result here last year, so it's pretty important to me. Look, I enjoy racing. Like I said, I think oval racing is important for the category, and the people that are a lot higher pay grade will choose exactly where that needs to provide the best product for our fans, to our sponsors, all that sort of stuff.

We certainly have a great -- I feel like we are trying to get the racing a little better here. Last year it was hard with the one-lane groove, but hopefully this year it's better, and especially when I'm set on P2 against Felix, I would love to be able to hold the outside and see what we've got. Who knows? We'll see.

**Q. Are you going to put that new aero piece on, and do you think everybody is putting it on tomorrow from this practice?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't know. I don't know, man. I just drive the thing. I don't know. Sorry.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, we'll let you go. We will see you in the front row tomorrow. Obviously joined by Felix Rosenqvist, second career pole position. It's been a couple of years now. 2019, IMS road course, first pole position.

Coming back to an oval. Go ahead and have a seat if you want. Just your general thoughts about your qualifying run and maybe the tense moments to watch everyone else that went after you to go after that time.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I know, it was a bit of a torture to watch that thing unfold, and, yeah, it was two really good laps. I kind of felt already this morning, to be honest, you felt that the car was in the window. There wasn't much balance changes needed, and it was the same thing during the qualifying laps. It was just kind of like in the zone where you wanted it.

The first lap was a bit loose, and the second lap was a bit under-steered, but you're never going to get it right. Yeah, it was good. It feels really good. I think for the whole Arrow McLaren SP Team and the 7 Car in general, it couldn't have been better timing to get this pole. It's a good boost mentally for all the guys and girls working on the car, and I think everyone just showed today that we refocused and came back. A little bit of a disappointment in St. Pete and, obviously, last year, but coming back here just fully focused and doing our own thing and putting the car on pole is really amazing.

**Q. Felix, you may have just heard Scott say how last year he lost a little bit of confidence with the way he was performing, and I'm wondering if you had any of those same issues as you kind of struggled if had your move to McLaren?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Sure. When you don't have a good result, there's always excuses and reasons and things, but if you don't have the result, then at the end of the day it's going to eat away at your confidence, right? Definitely. I feel like I've done a good job recharging every weekend, and I've gone into every weekend positively, but you don't actually have the confidence that you can do it in a way because the last time I had a good result was really a long time ago. Things like this is really important where you just kind of break the trend and like, hey, you can do this, we can do this. Our car is strong. We do a good job. We don't need to focus too much on the others, and just do our thing. Yeah, confidence if something goes up and down for sure.

**Q. Did you have to do anything, like any offseason reset, to come in fresh with a whole new approach or anything?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, I think it goes from track to track. Particularly this track is a track where I feel very confident, and last year we had two really good races here. We just didn't get a good finish for other reasons really, but yeah, I feel like you sometimes have to forget what happened and just kind of have fun with it. Don't overthink things. You need to think -- there are so many details you need to do right, but if you start thinking too much, you're never going to get better, so at some point you just have to let go of the demons and just jump in the car and have fun, and I think that was a good example today.

**Q. You've shown at practice you were quick and now qualifying, and with such a quick turn, what's your major expectation going in the race with more traffic? It will be much warmer and the timing much different compared to what we're going to do on race day in the morning.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think everyone wonders how it's going to race. It's going to be interesting. First practice was more of a qualifying practice for everyone, so we didn't really know how the cars raced, but obviously, we have that practice where we're going to rubber in the high-line or try to at least. Yeah, I don't know, man.

I think we're going to see. Whatever happens, I think we have a good package. That's what I'm excited about that. We have a good car and race trim, and we kind of know what we need to do if we're lacking something, what tools we can use. As a team we're pretty confident that we can execute well, but, yeah, I have no idea how the race is going to turn out. At least we have the front row. That's good.

**Q. With as potentially difficult a pass as it's going to in the race, not quite sure yet, did you focus more on qualifying setup versus race setup?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Our first practice was just all about qualifying. I don't know, I think some cars that tested here previously went out and did some race running, but I think most of the field treated that as a Fast Friday or something like that, and then it will be race focus from here on out, but we had really good race -- actually, I think we're going to be even stronger in the race. I mean, I can't promise that, but we have every reason to think that we have a good package overall, and I think the strength in our car here is very confidence-inspiring. It never really feels edgy. It's just really good setup, so, yeah, we're happy going into the

race.

**Q. Felix, you mentioned you had two good races here last year, and until the end, 2020 you ran really well too. Is there something about this place that clicked, and is this sort of like where oval racing kind of became second nature for you?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: For sure. I mean, I remember the first time I came here. Then it was definitely not fun. I was really scared the first time I was here, and it was actually the first super speedway I ever did, but, yeah, I think from 2020 onwards it's been a track where I feel really calm and confident, and I kind of know how to attack the race and how to work with the driving line and how the car needs to be set up, and I think it suits me pretty well naturally, and, yeah, definitely I feel like I have some unfinished business at Texas.

**Q. Even though Scott would not admit and maybe none of the drivers will admit whether they're going to use those extra aero pieces that INDYCAR has approved, there's the side walls and the trim walls, and I understand it's supposed to give you more downforce. Do you think that you would want that in the race? I assume you practice with it. Maybe you didn't. Maybe you're going to do some this afternoon. I think it would help you have more stability in trying to overtake.**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, that's normally the case, right? You want to have as much downforce as you can have. We haven't tried it yet because we just have been focusing on qualifying, but I think it's a good chance a lot of people will run it, but I honestly -- as Scott said, I don't really know what's the plan in the engineering track right now. Just driving. (Laughing).

**Q. Felix, going back to Nate's question, you said this is the first super speedway you ever drove on. A little bit scared. How much have you learned about yourself as a driver and about driving a race car over the course of the few years you've driven here, whether it's test sessions, practice, qualifying, or race?**

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think a lot. On these kind of tracks you're always your own worst enemy, right? You're always debating with yourself. You know, should I trim out? Should I change my tools? Should I go freer? Should I go tighter? It's always a constant mental thing, and I think it showed that just attacking it a bit more calmly has been good for me. Not overthinking it.

Kind of same at Indy. Also getting better and better every year. I mean, you can really get deep inside your head on

this these places and same thing there. You just have to, like, trust yourself and switch off and do it.

THE MODERATOR: Our friend on Zoom wants to know if your overall opinions of ovals have changed since you first arrived in the series?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: For sure. It was a definite struggle for me in the beginning. It was my weakest point. My first year I was actually one of the better runners on the road courses, but my oval performance was really, and I think last year was pretty much opposite, and hopefully this year it will be a mix of both, but, yeah, I mean, we have days like this, and it's fantastic, but when you have a rough day on Texas Motor Speedway, it's not fun. That's when you really see the true champions, I think, come out.

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