

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, July 3, 2022

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the driver of the Odyssey Battery Team Penske Chevrolet, Scott McLaughlin comes home with the second win of the season, led 45 of the 80 laps, second win of the season, second of his career obviously. 288 now for Team Penske in the INDYCAR Series. This is also their record 12th win here at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. You started towards the front, stayed up front. Tell us about your day.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, amazing day. Obviously the plan was just to slot into P2 if we could. Best case was to get ahead of Pato but worse case was to slot in behind him and get into it. I felt pretty good, felt pretty strong straight away and then I think we lost the balance towards the end of the race a little bit. Just the car wasn't as nice those last few stints even though we were leading, but thankfully had enough to hold off Alex there.

Yeah, some pretty tense restarts and defending and doing bits and pieces, but really proud of everyone. The car has been awesome. We've had promise of top 5s in bits and pieces but we just haven't put it together, and to finally put together after two good races, had Road America P7 and today winning the race, it's a really proud moment for us all.

THE MODERATOR: You had to deal with a couple of restarts. Obviously that was an ideal time for others to make a pass or try to move towards the front; how nerve-racking was that for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it was nerve-racking, but at the same time I've been working for this. I've been studying this trying to get better and better on restarts. My cold tire pace is a lot better than it used to be, feel a lot more comfortable with the car and being able to maximize the car and cold out laps, cold restarts. It was difficult when Alex was on red tires behind me, but thankfully held on there, and then we were able to build a gap similar to what we did on the black tires.

I feel really, really proud. We're learning -- I'm still building, still soaking everything up like a sponge, but really proud of

where we're at right now in my development.

Q. I got to see Wayne and Diane out there. Wayne said he had to keep it calm because he noticed a camera on him, but he said they were thrilled to see you win. How does it feel to all be together?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's awesome. It's not just to be together but just to win with them here. That's the coolest thing. Even in Australia, I didn't really win with them a lot in Australia. It's been a while since they've been -- I think the last win I had was the Bathurst 1000 in 2019 with them in town.

Really excited to have them here, and it just means so much. They're the people that shaped me as a person, and to have them here with me and my wife and Charlotte and just hanging out, it's been a cool couple months. We're definitely -- I'm probably giving them a few more gray hairs, but that's part of the development of everything, and I'm really proud to win in front of them, win in front of mom, and yeah, I just wish Carly was here. Carly is not here. She said, should I not come anymore? And I said no, you come, because you were here at St. Pete, so she'll be all right.

Q. One, were you surprised he was able to stay calm because he's normally --

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I try and zone him out. He's like a butterfly. He might fly, he might not. He just chills out and does his thing. That was probably the worst analogy for my old man, but look, he's just who he is. I'm very proud of him to be my dad.

Q. He said that -- I know it means a lot for all of you to win, but he said that you guys hadn't talked about it because he didn't want to put that pressure on you to do that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, but every time I roll out to qualify he goes, pole is acceptable. He can say that all he wants, but there's always a bit of pressure with mom and dad. No, they ask a lot of me, not only as an athlete but as a person. I put down a lot to how I've been brought up because of them and how hard they were on me, and to accept defeat, to accept adversity, to accept victory in the

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

right ways, I'm really just -- it's just amazing just this journey doing it together.

Q. Scott, the restart there where Alex got up next to you and all of a sudden there's a yellow, as you look back on it now, was that the moment in the race when he made his move, it didn't work, and really never made another one?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, you know, one thing, each restart I learned something, and I knew where he was strong, where he wasn't, where I was strong, where I wasn't. It just sort of made me figure out a few spots. That was definitely a restart that he wasn't ideal for me, but I would have been surprised if Alex had got past me at that corner. I was driving him pretty deep, and he was on my outside.

Yeah, but thankfully I was able to learn and continue to build, and that's all part of it.

Q. The other thing I was talking with Tim Cindric down there on pit road afterwards and bringing you up and the way you came up and the Bathurst 1000 -- you cut your teeth down there, and this is just a matter of you becoming more and more at one with your race car here. That's his sense of it. Can you put that into words how many more comfortable you feel in that car at moments like that than you did a year ago?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, it's night and day. Even my experience in terms of what I want from the car, what I'm asking from the team, what I want from the car in a pit stop, wing changes, whatever. I'm a lot more assertive now with what I want.

I'm a lot more assertive with where I'm going to go. I'm not second-guessing what I'm doing. I'm just, this is what it's going to be, and so be it.

Yeah, I'm super proud with where we're going and my development, like I said, and I think we can continue to push, and I think it's been building. At the end of the day I feel like since we had Barber and then we went to Indy and we were basically leading that race and then obviously slick tires didn't work in the wet, and basically every race since then I've been there or thereabouts. Indy, crashed when I was in a good spot; not going to win the race but a good spot for points. Every race since then we've been in a spot to be top 5 or top 8. We've converted it the last two races, and that's what we've got to continue to do if we want to get back into this fight.

Q. Scott, what was most difficult part of keeping Alex behind you like that?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think when he was on red tires and I was on basically fresh black tires, had no temp in them, and that was really difficult. If anything I was thankful for the second yellow that we got when I was on the black tire because actually I was able to almost build pressure a little bit there and then get a feel for what it was going to be like, and then it was just a matter of just putting it together the next couple restarts, and like I said, learning from my mistakes.

But yeah, I was a little bit nervous probably the last restart potentially because red tires behind both me and Alex. I was hoping that they would keep him behind because it gave us a bit of a buffer, and thankfully that happened.

Q. This is also -- you said before you're your own biggest critic, but do you think you maybe need to lay off on yourself now that you've won again?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, no. I'll just keep -- I'm very competitive. I hate losing to my teammates. I hate making mistakes. But that makes me competitive. That makes me work hard and make myself better.

Yeah, so I think if I lose any competitiveness or aggression to myself, I'm not going to be as good as I want to be. I've got two teammates that are pushing me to no end, and if I do the right job on the day, I can certainly beat them like we've seen.

Q. If this wasn't a perfect drive, what would have made it a perfect drive?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It was a pretty good day, yeah. I think I should ask for a little bit less front wing. That's about it.

Q. What would be a perfect race?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Pole, lead every lap. But yeah, I don't know. There's always going to be bits and pieces -- I might not be able to tell you now whether it was a perfect race or not, but I think I'll debrief hard with Ben and we'll figure it out. There's going to be points during the weekend that I could have done -- you know what, no. What was preventing it was my first restart behind Alex leading the race. It was a terrible restart and I went too early and I shouldn't have done that. Looking back on it now, I shouldn't have done that, and that's what stops it from being a perfect day.

Q. I love how hard you are on yourself, but to think back to a year ago, things weren't going exactly the way you'd want to in your rookie year, and your

development has been something pretty special I would say.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, I think it's just all about just belief, believing in what you can do, going back to the basics and just trusting your feel, trusting what got me here was what I should just go back to and just trust. That's certainly what I've done the last six months, last eight months.

You know, I'm just super pumped.

Q. You mentioned that you tend to be more self-critical. Did having your family here cause you to be like harder on yourself, or was that just an additional source of motivation?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's probably more so just an additional source. I think I get my competitiveness, I get my -- I guess your harshness on myself from my old man and mom. Mom was pretty strict with me, as well, with schoolwork and then dad was pretty strict with me just with work ethic and making sure that I was working hard on everything.

But having them here, they know when to give me space, when not to. It's just been nice to be able to just hang out and watch a movie with mom and dad. I haven't been able to do that for a while, so it's been awesome.

Q. PeopleReady Force for Good Challenge continues, even though your teammate won the grand prize at Road America \$10,000. I forget your charity.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, Memorial Sloan Kettering. Very close to my wife's family's heart especially, so excited to add another 10 grand to them, and if we can restart the 1 million, that would be pretty cool.

Q. If Texas had maybe gone a little differently --

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I know, I know. Probably wouldn't have won that today. That's what's making it not a perfect day. I screwed up Texas.

Q. You're the second person to win multiple races this season. It's just you and Josef who have won more than one race this season. I just wondered if you've thought about allowing yourself to sort of enjoy this experience. Have you actually settled down and thought about and had pride in what you've been able to achieve based on taking those two wins and your development of where you are now?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, absolutely. I'm

privileged to be able to compete against Will and Josef as teammates and see their data and it allows me to develop better. They're absolutely at the top of their game. They've been at the top of their game for a long time, and I'm able to rebound off them.

Just yesterday before qualifying Josef was really the one that said, hey, you should maybe go back to your old setup because you looked stronger on that and whatever, and we actually ended up doing that, and that's what happened. We qualified really well, and it worked out good. We've got a really good relationship between the three of us. We want to beat each other more than anything, but it's solid, it's a partnership that I think is going to push Team Penske more and more forward in the future, and I'm proud to be a part of it.

Yeah, really proud of where I'm at, where my development has gone, and I think I'm just enjoying it more. I'm having a ball. It's just so much fun here, living in the States and just having a lot of fun.

Q. Where does today put you in the championship do you think from your perspective? Are you thinking that the championship is still winnable from this point and that's a target for you? Where are you at mentally with that?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I just never give up, but in INDYCAR things can change in a heartbeat. I've just got to keep building -- every race I've got to keep making the most of the situation that I've got, and that's something that I probably didn't do the last sort of month.

I'm excited for what's ahead. A win is a big thing for us, moved us forward a little bit. I don't know where it's put us in the standings, but if we keep building, I fell like Toronto is going to be a track that's going to suit me. I haven't been there but I'm excited for it, and then Iowa I felt really strong at the test and it's two races there. If we can have a solid next three races, who knows where it puts us.

Q. You came here after some tough runs; what was that different thing you did today to reach a win compared to those tough runs?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, I think I just -- heading into today -- I don't think I had the win at Road America; I think we did pretty well to finish top 7. It wasn't a smooth sailing weekend for us. But qualifying P2 yesterday, we had a chance to win the race today, and it was all about capitalizing on that. I would have been frustrated if we sort of lost this race because where we were position-wise, how many laps we led, it's similar to Texas in some ways. You've got to maximize where you're at. So yeah, I was

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

feeling obviously pretty good.

The other days when things are going bad, I just probably was trying to overachieve -- I was trying to win the race from a position where it was just wasn't going to happen unless something fell our way tremendously.

Yeah, I've just got to settle down in some situations, take the races as they come and just let INDYCAR be INDYCAR and hopefully it falls my way.

Q. I want to ask you about that last stint against Alex. It was like he was chasing you, but then on those final two laps, you were quicker than him. Did you feel you had the race in control in that last stint?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think I pulled away from him a little bit with sort of 10 to go, and then I sort of felt like he was going to be looking out for his tires, so I backed off a little bit more, just to look after mine. But the best thing about my race was I had some Push-to-Pass up my sleeve, so I was able to sort of use that as a defense tool, as well.

Yeah, that was certainly a help towards the end there, and yeah, it was just a bit of a cat-and-mouse game from that point. Alex would come at me a little bit, and I would heat his tires up, and then I'd pull away and he'd back off, and it would sort of go that way. Really the only thing that was going to be a little bit of drama for us was if I made a mistake or there was a restart, and thankfully the race went green until the end.

Q. It's a double-header for the Kiwis today, Hunter McElrea taking out the Indy Lights race, you taking out this race. People say we live so far away and we're off the radar but I'm sure you feel very proud and I know Wayne will be after speaking to him when I was at Indy. This is a big thing for Kiwi motorsport, isn't it.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think Scotty has flown the flag for so long here in the U.S., and to now have some support for him, I guess, and Hunter, I would be very surprised if he's not an INDYCAR driver one day. He's killing it. He's a young bloke with a lot of confidence, a lot of feeling with the car, and he's in a great team at Andretti. I think we'll see him in the near future in an INDYCAR. Awesome for him to get a race win.

For me, I'm constantly trying to sort of shape myself. If I'm somewhere near where Scotty has been, he's a six-time champ and someone that's just a legend of motorsport over here that we probably don't give enough respect to down under. I think he's someone that you can really use as a role model, and if I can have half the success he's

had, I'm going to have a pretty good career.

Q. Looking ahead to Toronto, it's been a long time since the series has been there. We all know the reasons why. I think it's the first time the aeroscreen will have been raced there, as well. Alex hasn't been there. How much of a level playing field does that make that for you being a first timer at Toronto?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's going to be interesting, I guess. Yeah, absolutely we haven't been there like with the aeroscreen and a few things, and Team Penske is always pretty good there. But yeah, I've really got a nice sort of street race sort of race package. I feel like our car handles really good for car 3, and I'm confident to head there and learn the track pretty quickly and just get on with it.

It's going to be a tough weekend, probably tougher than most street tracks because I haven't been there before, but for sure there's going to be a level playing field in some ways within a number of people that are out in front in the championship, so yeah, we'll see where we're at.

Q. From afar, watching Scott Dixon do what he's done in INDYCAR and now coming here, did that change your appreciation for how difficult it is in this series and for what Scott's done?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think my appreciation of what he's done and what he's achieved is just -- he's a legend of the sport and someone that I'm very privileged to race against in his era. Him, Helio, I think those couple of guys, even Tony Kanaan, guys like that have been around here for a long time and being able to race them is a very cool thing. I've got a little highlight in my timing screen of Scotty because I want to try and beat him. If I'm at the front, if I'm in front of the car 9, I know I'm going to be there or thereabouts in time.

But that's not a -- I have to beat Scott or whatever. It's just a yardstick, and I feel like he's one of the best to have a yardstick on along with my two teammates, Josef and Will, the peak of the powers.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, actually we did.

Q. What do you remember about it?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, Steve was a huge supporter of me in Supercars, and I actually raced him when he went back and started a team in New Zealand, in New Zealand touring cars down under. Yeah, great guy, someone that

he worked with Supercars quite closely, and obviously he's very well-known here in the INDYCAR paddock and gave the starts to careers of guys like Helio and Tony and all that sort of stuff.

Yeah, Steve is a really nice guy, really quietly spoken, but you can sort of see him, he's tweeting me and doing bits and pieces. He's always sort of keeping an eye on a few things, so it's very cool to have that interaction with him.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I text Gary all the time. I actually texted him last night. He's always texting me going, just have fun, keep working. I think he still thinks he's my boss. But it's a good thing.

We've always got along, and it's always been a full respect thing. Even when I told him I was coming to drive for Penske, he was very -- he was sad, but at the same time he knew how big an opportunity this was going to be for me in the future, and I think he really enjoys the ride that I'm on right now.

Q. You three were getting along in here because of course your days went better than some others, but do you have to try and keep track of who out there doesn't like who so you can talk to the right people? Even for dinner plans, right now you can't go with anybody that's an Andretti guy with one of their teammates?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Really? I don't know what happened and I don't care.

Q. We had a lot of Andretti-on-Andretti violence out there.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, was there? I mean, that's been building all year.

Q. I'd avoid them.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, I always race all the Andretti guys very well. I think out of all the paddocks I've been in the world, I think this is a very -- a paddock that has a lot of camaraderie and it's a good thing, but you're going to have disagreements, you're going to have bits and pieces where people don't get along. That's part of it. That's the theater. That's what we need.

We get along right now, but for sure I've had -- Will spun me out last year and he's my teammate. Alex, he's a pretty nice guy. There's nothing I can say bad about him. But for the most part everyone is pretty good. You're competitive, you race each other hard, but that's just what it is.

Q. It is the 4th of July weekend. You've spent considerable time in the United States now. To win on a holiday weekend like this, any significance for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Well, I wore a blowup eagle outfit last night, so I think I'm going to do that every Saturday night for our race at Mid-Ohio. It's a significant day for America. It's a significant day for me. Eventually one day I'll be a U.S. citizen, and I'm proud to be here.

My wife is actually having a massive party right now. I was talking to her before; she was -- a couple of drinks under her belt, but she was having a good time.

But we're very proud to be back here in America and very proud to be able to just race on a pretty awesome weekend.

THE MODERATOR: It's funny, the Bus Bros photo you guys took --

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: How American was that?

Q. And ironically enough you two are the only multiple winners this year, so there you go.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We both dressed up like dickheads. I'm going to send that into the U.S. customs as evidence for my U.S. citizenship. Just going to say, I'm fully American.

Q. That should do it.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Land of the free, baby.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports