

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us. As we all know, it's a busy stretch coming up for the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. Five races in four weeks. It begins with the much-anticipated return to the streets of Toronto for Sunday's Honda Indy Toronto.

Today's guest, as you might imagine, knows a thing or two what it takes to succeed in Toronto, three-time winner, most among active drivers, two-time pole winner, Will Power.

Will, how are you doing today?

WILL POWER: I'm doing very well. Thank you. How are you?

THE MODERATOR: Doing fine. Obviously we deeply missed our friends in Toronto over the last couple years. How much are you looking forward to going back to Ontario?

WILL POWER: Yeah, very much so. I love the city there, and the track is very unique. Really isn't a track that we go to that's like that. It's near impossible to get a good balance in the car, so it's a lot of compromise. Feel like it's a real driver's track. It's pretty hard.

THE MODERATOR: We'll see how much of it's changed over the years with the winters they have there. Most importantly, though, you come off a crazy drive at Mid-Ohio where you were plus 18 on the day. Could have been a bad day points-wise, but you turned it into one of the most impressive drives. Looking back at it, a championship-saving drive maybe. How big was that weekend for you, in your view?

WILL POWER: It was a very good recovery. I would say we had a car that, I feel like, could definitely challenge for pole. It was unfortunate what happened. Our fault. We weren't on top of that. We should have been.

Obviously the strategy and the car was great in the race. Yep, did not expect to make it all the way back to third, but

I knew our car was strong. With yellows and restarts, good pit stop sequence, we were able to make our way all the way up to a podium.

I was hoping at the beginning of that day for a top 10. I said that a few times this year, like at Detroit, like at Barber, but we've made it much further.

Yeah, definitely showing my race craft ability with all these bad qualifying, which I haven't been able to do for most of my career because I've always qualified right up at the front. Plus, you learn when you're back there, as well, when you're in the mix of stuff.

THE MODERATOR: Let's go ahead and open it up for questions.

Q. Will, it's been a very good year at Team Penske. Your teammates have won multiple races. What do you see the reason for why the entire team is better?

WILL POWER: The tire changed a little bit. Basically the Firestone tires that we were running last year had sat around a lot, so the tire was obviously hardening over time. I think the tire's simply better this year, which brought our cars into a better place for where we live.

We also did a lot of development in the off-season. I actually feel like last year we had bad luck. I wouldn't call it luck, but just strange things happened when we had cars in position to win and such. Yeah, last year wasn't as bad as it looked on performance. It was just one of those years that was just a little bit messy and things didn't flow our way.

Newgarden should have won Road America. I should have won in Detroit. We should have challenging for the win in Laguna. It's just races like that that kind of made it look worse.

Yes, we're certainly firing on all cylinders this year.

Q. I know a lot of drivers and teams say, We're only focused on what we can do. But you got to admit, you got to be a little interested in the mid-season drama that has developed over the last couple of days. What do you think of the Alex Palou, McLaren, Chip Ganassi



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situation?

WILL POWER: I've heard rumors around the paddock of exactly what's transpiring right now. Yeah, it's kind of good for the series really to have a bit of action in the paddock (smiling).

Yeah, obviously I don't know the details of everything that has gone on there. Yeah, it's going to be interesting to see how that whole thing plays out.

Q. Doesn't it also create a huge distraction on that team as they're trying to battle for a championship?

WILL POWER: Well, I think that's been a distraction all year for those guys because this whole thing has been going on behind the scenes.

Yeah, not ideal if you're fighting for a championship within a team. Definitely not ideal.

Q. Have you ever seen anything like this before in your career in INDYCAR?

WILL POWER: I have not seen this in INDYCAR. I mean, this sort of thing goes on obviously all the time, various businesses. It's just one of those things where it's going to come down to the wording in the contract simply.

Q. How distracting can contract negotiations be for a driver mid-season?

WILL POWER: It can make some drivers perform better and some perform worse. Yeah, some need that sort of pressure to bring the best out of them, and some don't do well under those situations.

Ideally I think you want everything settled and you want pretty good vibes in the team. But it totally depends on the individual.

Q. There's been nine different polesitters so far this season. Why do you think qualifying has been so up in the air particularly with this season?

WILL POWER: Simply because it's so competitive. There is no one that is dominating, no one stands out. You can try to pick the polesitter for this weekend. You simply couldn't. Even the drivers, you couldn't pick who might be on pole, which to me is a great thing.

Q. For yourself, for this season, which drive was more impressive for you, Mid-Ohio drive or Detroit Grand Prix drive?

WILL POWER: I think Mid-Ohio, coming from the very back, having spun, to get to the podium was definitely, yep. Tires weren't a big deal there. Like reds and blacks were pretty similar over a stint. Yeah, that's a great job from the team overall with strategy and staying in the game, and also for me to keep my head, slowly chip away at it.

Yeah, I would say Mid-Ohio.

Q. Will, you guys as a team have won six of the nine races so far. Can you just describe the confidence that you guys are walking in with every week, regardless of where you're going?

WILL POWER: I've always had that confidence being in that team, that you will turn up to a weekend with a chance to win. That's always kind of been my feeling. Like, I never walked into a weekend thinking, Man, we've got no chance.

When you start having good runs on the board, you're right there in the points, it does give you confidence. You're obviously feeling good about the situation. You're not feeling like you have to do anything desperate, you're just having to execute. You're sitting in that sweet spot of performance.

Q. Will, back to Mid-Ohio, a comment you made in your press conference after the race. You mentioned your parents have never been here for a win. Is that legitimate, other than the time you won the championship in '14?

WILL POWER: Yeah, my mother was at the championship when I won in '14. But, yes, my parents haven't been to a race for years. I can't remember the last time my dad came. Might be 2009 or something. No? '11 was the last time my dad came to a race. Yeah, they haven't really seen much of on-track action.

My brother has come twice. '18 when I won the 500, then on to Detroit when I won Detroit. I have two other brothers as well that have never been to a race.

Q. You're right here in the title fight, eight races left. Any discussions of them coming over here, being here by the time we get to Monterey?

WILL POWER: No, they won't come. I don't know that for sure. My wife might surprise me. I doubt it. I doubt I'll see my parents. I doubt it, yeah. I don't think they'll come.

Q. For Toronto this weekend, not there since '19, a lot of rookies here. This will be your 14th start on that track. Is that an advantage or does the aeroscreen



kind of negate everything?

WILL POWER: I think it will be different. The tire's probably a little different. It's so tight these years. The little tiny things do make a big difference.

Yeah, the field is so good now, there's so many good drivers, it really doesn't matter if someone has been there or not because they seem to get up to speed so quickly. Yeah, you can't feel like you ever have an advantage in this game.

Q. The Palou, Ganassi, and McLaren situation. There's a good shot we could be coming to Indy in a couple weeks, the three of you Penske guys are fighting for a title. Is there an interesting dynamic behind the scenes? Seems like you all get along. You see what happens with Andretti. Is it an interesting dynamic in the sense it's kind of hard to show what you know? Is it a tough act to balance working with a teammate, fighting that same teammate for a championship?

WILL POWER: It is a very tough balance. To me, the most awkward thing about motorsport is that you have a teammate, and you're absolutely compared off your teammates, you have the same equipment. Very tough balance.

But Penske, I don't think Penske would ever allow it to get to the point where we're having big issues with each other on track. We understand that. We understand that it's about the team and not about the drivers. You never put yourself first.

You work hard, you work together off the track. Obviously we're kind of separate teams on the track. I have to say with both Scott and Josef, it's been very good as far as the information that we share. Like, they are both super quick. It has helped me a lot. That's to me an advantage.

Q. It seems like street courses could go either way as far as qualifying position. Toronto seems to favor starting position more. Is starting position going to mean a lot this weekend?

WILL POWER: It looks like that way just reviewing the race. I've thought that a few times this year. Obviously tracks I feel like are tough to pass. We've actually made some hay. Like who knows, it could be a straightforward race, it can be pretty green, not much chance to make passes.

But INDYCAR at the moment is so competitive that who knows. Like, at the end of the day you can never give up.

Don't be too down in the mouth if you don't qualify well.

But it matters, though. Qualifying up front, if you execute well, you're certainly going to finish up front.

Q. What makes Toronto so difficult, and why is it that it feels like the guys that are champions of the sport always seem to perform well there?

WILL POWER: The track is just difficult because there's so many different levels of grip. Like, you never feel in the track, on top of the track, it's sliding. The car never handles well. It's kind of difficult to tell your engineer what to do because there's so much compromise.

Maybe it's a track that it's easy to make a mistake on. That's why maybe veterans or people being around a bit longer don't end up making mistakes. That might be the reason that you've seen champions win.

Yeah, it's a tough track. A lot of mayhem can happen there, a lot of mayhem.

THE MODERATOR: You talked about how young guys can show up at tracks, and they seem so competitive, everybody is on their A game. Is part of that because of sim work that some of these guys are doing, they're more prepared going into a race weekend? What do you chalk that up to?

WILL POWER: Definitely simulator work. You know the braking points, you know the gears, you know the track. You don't know the track condition. But, yeah, that's a pretty big chunk of time you cut off trying to understand where a track goes by being on a sim the week before. That is a big, big help.

Obviously video these days, so much on-board footage, there's so much information to take in before you get there. You turn up, you're going out first session knowing the track.

THE MODERATOR: I also love the fact that Liz is over your shoulder correcting you on any misinformation on the family.

WILL POWER: She's just sitting right there, nodding, shaking her head up and down. That's right, you shouldn't say that, you should do this. I promise you, I've done this a few times. I can get through one of these without making a mistake.

A race, that's another story (laughter). She's going to be on the radio at the race and start telling me...

Q. We've seen in every category of motorsport a lot of drivers that perform worse after a mistake, but you showed us the opposite on Mid-Ohio. It made you more powerful to come back on the grid. Do you think that thing about yourself, do you think mistakes can, like, make you more powerful on track being faster? I don't know to say help you, do you think you have the (indiscernible) to go faster at Mid-Ohio after that mistake?

WILL POWER: Yeah, honestly after I spun, I just gathered it up and didn't really reflect on it, and just started passing people. Obviously it's not even on your mind when you get to that point. Then you just start progressing, doing your job.

I think that's the only mentality you can have. I think the mistake people might make, I've made in the past, you get desperate. Oh, my God, I'm at the back, I made a mistake. That is right there, the mindset, that will make you have a worse race.

I wasn't even upset or mad. It's like, Okay, how do I keep going? Don't stall the car. Got right back into it. Didn't even think about it. The sooner you can get over that stuff, the better. You can't be thinking about it three laps later. You have to keep chipping away.

Still at that point in your mind every single point matters, so every position does matter. Maybe that's your bad day that you spun. It's your bad day. But every point matters here.

That's kind of the mentality I had at Indy when I went back to pretty much last in the first stint. I was like, This is double points, every position I get matters at the end of the year. That was the mentality.

You're not going to win every race, so it's just getting the most out of every situation. That's really what I have been doing this year.

Q. When you were there on the podium, you were satisfied about that performance. You were frustrated about what happened?

WILL POWER: I was extremely happy about the finish. I was very, very happy with third. I couldn't honestly believe that I made it to third. I was really, really happy. Just felt great for the team.

It was a weekend that we had a lot of potential to win. But, like I said, you can't win them all. You do have bad races. If you can come back from a mistake, that's even better.

Yeah, I was very, very happy with that day. Very happy.

Q. I remember weeks ago I asked Scott Dixon about who would he like to share a team with. He mentioned you. I was thinking about with this Alex stuff, he's moved to McLaren, would you like to share a team with other drivers like Scott Dixon?

WILL POWER: I would love to be Scott Dixon's teammate. Maybe that will happen at some point here.

THE MODERATOR: Will, you handled that well.

WILL POWER: I would like to be Scott's teammate. It would be a strong team, a very strong team.

THE MODERATOR: A few championships and wins put together, for sure.

WILL POWER: Yeah.

Q. A question I've asked both the Scotts recently. The future development of young drivers, particularly from our part of the world, New Zealand and Australia. Do you see Australia fostering new talent towards single-seater racing, particularly in North America? No one seems to be heading towards North America.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I was really happy to see Hunter McElrea doing so good. I think he's a super fast driver. Has definitely, definitely the potential to get to INDYCAR and do well.

But, yeah, I don't know what's going on down in Australia so much these days. I haven't been back there for a long time. I have to say, though, I'm sure Drive to Survive is helping just open-wheel motorsports in general. Like, I think go-karting is more popular now. I think all those series.

I think it's great. It's giving open-wheel racing relevance. People understand the cars now. When they see an INDYCAR, they can identify, Oh, yeah, that's just like a Formula 1 car.

I think having Scott come over and do really well from Supercars, I think kids would see that and go, Maybe I want to go that route. If you do some Supercar driving, doesn't mean you can't come and race open-wheels. You've seen how well Scott adapted pretty quickly.

Yeah, I would love to see more Australians over here. I think now Roger has taken the series over, the ladder system will get stronger. You already see there's more Indy Lights cars. Hopefully more again next year.

That's what it needs, is a very good ladder system with three categories before INDYCAR. If you start doing more than that, it starts watering the three down. I hope that we can get three strong series together, massive fields. Yeah, it helps that ladder system.

Q. There's a lot of New Zealanders, and Australians, that go on to development series with Supercars. What McLaughlin has done helps.

WILL POWER: What you have to look at, too, look at the past champions of Indy Lights. Not even champions, but guys that have competed first and second. Look at Pato O'Ward and Colton Herta. Those guys are testing Formula 1 right now. Who was last year's champion? Kirkwood.

I mean, if you go through that ladder system, you win on each rung of those ladders, you get money to go to the next series. There's nothing like that anywhere else in the world.

It's a good place to go, it really is. It's not as expensive as Europe. You are guaranteed to continue if you win. I think that's a pretty good deal.

Q. For Toronto, the Canadian fan base looking forward to a race there. I'm sure that will make the race that much more exciting for you as a driver.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think speaking to Kevin Savoree, he said ticket sales are really good. I think we'll get a massive crowd. Always do. I think the Canadian fans are some of the best in the world. They love their sport. A real party atmosphere. Nothing better than racing in front of a big crowd. I expect it to be a pretty good event.

Q. The drive in Mid-Ohio, no matter where you end up in the season championship points, just has to go down as the drive of the year. Thank you for putting on a grand display. It was great to watch. You also mentioned that this year has been augmented by having family come on over. Your brother shared time with you in the fountain in Michigan. He has a career that's similar to yours in that it's dictated on a venue-by-venue basis. Have you ever thought of teaming up and having him give his shows surrounding INDYCAR venues?

WILL POWER: No, obviously really enjoy him coming over because we share a similar sense of humor. Obviously enjoy his company massively.

No, I've often thought about what we could do together after INDYCAR, on the comedy side of stuff because obviously he has a lot of contacts in Australia. Maybe we

can do some sort of TV show or something.

Yeah, haven't ever really thought about him. He has talked about coming to the U.S. and doing gigs. I think he'd just have to follow what his management puts in place for him.

Yeah, no, I would love him to live over here. That would be cool. I think he's going to at some point pretty soon.

Q. You're both on an event-by-event type of career path.

WILL POWER: Yeah.

Q. In Toronto, you mentioned the track just has so many varying grips, and it's really hard to pass. Given the way you've approached this year, and being able to not start at the front all the time, as you more normally do, do you see that as ever being trouble for you going forward into Toronto as long as you're in the first third of the field?

WILL POWER: Yeah, these days if you get in the top six, you're pretty happy. You know you can do a lot from there.

God, man, it's so hard to predict the races. Like, it could go green. It could be a very straightforward race.

I don't think Toronto is all that difficult to pass. There are places to pass. You can pass. What's happened is the field is so tough now, everyone is about the same speed in the race. That's what makes it hard to pass. It's not necessarily the track.

I think Firestone has done a good job of making a big difference between blacks and reds. There's another way that you can just switch up strategy and just be on a different tire than everyone else, different to the conventional strategies.

Yeah, based on the three races I've had this year where I've come from way back, you would stress less about qualifying badly, just knowing if you keep your head you can definitely make hay.

The points situation also changes the way you race a bit. You're not in this 'I have nothing to lose' sort of mentality, so you do race a little differently because of that, as well.

Q. The balance of seeing you on the track this year has been decent. Very mature, a lot of fun. You're just making it tougher for everyone else.

WILL POWER: Everyone makes it tougher on each other. It's a great group, great series. There's nothing like it in the

world, honestly. The disciplines you have to do, the competition, the different nationalities, it's a pretty unique series.

Q. Question on Chevy reliability. We saw some issues at Mid-Ohio where there were four unprecedented problems. Any concern on your part or the team's part for anything going forward on that?

WILL POWER: On the engine front?

Q. Yes.

WILL POWER: Yeah, obviously always concerned when you see that. I will say that all the Chevys are switching out engines because they're all up on mileage for this race. They are all on new engines. (Indiscernible) Indy 500 race engines.

Chevy obviously does a big investigation into what happened. Usually a failure creates -- it doesn't happen twice, put it that way. I don't know the findings of their investigation. I know one of them was not a Chevy issue.

Q. The team comfortable with the swap-out, just feeling no issues probably? You guys didn't have any.

WILL POWER: No. No. I think we're all pretty comfortable. We've had this engine for a long time. It's been pretty reliable. Sometimes oddball things happen. They take care of it.

Q. How much do you see the aeroscreen affecting the racing that we're going to see in Toronto this weekend?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it definitely changed the car a lot because it moves the weight further forward. But I've actually found at Toronto, as the weight has gone forward, it's really helped.

On those really slippery cement patches, the actual weight downforce matters, so you get more weight force on the front tires, and it actually helps turn the car. That was a big problem when the car had really rearward weight, that the front tires would not work over that cement.

Obviously at some point, when you have high grip, that weight matters laterally. But the grip is so low that the lateral -- the actual weight downforce is more than the actual lateral force. So, yeah, it's interesting. To me it actually helped at that specific track, at Toronto.

Q. You've been strong this year. What do you feel you and Team Penske need to do to be even stronger?

WILL POWER: For me personally is to qualify better. It's not always been about pace. Last week it was just strategy and the lack of communication that got us. I actually feel like we would have definitely made it through to the Fast Six and potentially had a pole.

Yeah, the last couple, Road America being P2 in practice, then not converting that in qualifying, that's the sort of thing we've got to be on top of.

I've just had a messy year of qualifying as far as being in the wrong place on track or not getting a big enough gap to the car in front, or simply not performing, not being fast enough. I've had all those situations. That's the area I need to improve on for the next half of this season. I think that will put me in a really good position, if I do.

Q. You were talking earlier about the competition level in the series. Do you feel it's at an all-time high compared to years past?

WILL POWER: Yeah, definitely the all-time high as far as driver talent, the quality of teams. Yeah, it hasn't been this tough ever. Yeah, three big teams now, four big teams: Penske, McLaren, Andretti, Ganassi. You add Shank into that. I don't think there's a series more competitive around the world than this.

Q. Colton had his test with McLaren the other day. It appears that it went very well, even though it's last year's car and the test was designed for him to get his Super License points. What did you think of the whole test situation?

WILL POWER: Yeah, man, I wish there was Zak Brown around when I was that age, when I first got to INDYCAR, because I know I would have got a chance in Formula 1.

It's cool to see that because I know how that feels. I know how awesome that would be for Colton. I really hope, if he goes there, he does really well.

But, yeah, I mean, a great opportunity. I think it's just so fantastic to have a team like McLaren and Zak Brown in INDYCAR. I think it's great for the series. It's good for the young guys here obviously.

I think it's great what Zak Brown is doing, I do. Cool to see.

Q. Do you think McLaren, Arrow McLaren SP, has an advantage cornering young talent because he can dangle this F1 ride to joining his team, like we've seen with Palou?

WILL POWER: Yes, absolutely. That would be 100% why Palou would want to go there. I don't blame him honestly. I mean, I would be the same. If you had a chance to go and race in F1, as big as F1 is now, yeah, you would want to go there. It's pretty cool.

You think about the reach that McLaren has, Formula E, Formula 1, sports car. Man, it's a pretty good place, pretty good organization to be involved with.

Q. How far off do you think Arrow McLaren SP is to joining the Penskes and Ganassis at the very elite level of INDYCAR?

WILL POWER: They're right there. They're right there. It will be interesting. Obviously they've had young drivers, so it takes a while for the young guys to understand exactly what you need as far as development goes.

But adding Rossi to the team, there's a guy with a lot of experience. I think that's kind of what it needed. Yeah, they're there, man. They're very, very strong. They're a very good team.

Q. With this being the first time in Toronto, over half the field hasn't, like, been there before. Does that give you an extra confidence boost because you have been there before and done well?

WILL POWER: No, no. Basically with simulators and video and everything, it doesn't really give you an advantage any more. I think people turn up, they pretty much know the track.

Yeah, it's anyone's guess who will be the quickest there and what the top 10 would be, honestly.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for joining us. Will, safe travels to you. We'll see you in Toronto.

WILL POWER: Absolutely. Thanks.

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