

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Wednesday, July 27, 2022

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us this afternoon. The busy stretch continues for the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. This week returning to the road course at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Our guest this week, two-time race winner here in 2022, coming off a podium at Iowa Speedway. This weekend he is in the No. 3 Gallagher Team Penske Chevrolet.

Scott McLaughlin, thanks for doing this.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Hi, everyone. Thanks for having me. Appreciate it.

THE MODERATOR: Let's begin with your season as a whole. Began with a win at St. Pete, continuing with a win at Mid-Ohio. A huge upswing for you in 2022. How would you describe the season?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think it's been an awesome sort of turnaround for us on car 3. I think the potential was always there, but just putting it together in an INDYCAR is very hard. It still is very hard.

We had some really good results going on there on Saturday at Iowa. I think we could have easily walked away with two podiums. At least to get one was fantastic. First time racing in Iowa. Certainly first time qualifying there. Felt we were pretty competitive. Certainly a lot different to what I've been used to on some of the other short tracks and even some of the big ovals.

I've been really happy with our progress this year. I surely would like to be a little bit closer. I think Saturday really hurt in terms of points-wise where we're at in the championship. I think we still have that belief that we can come back in the top five and potentially win the championship.

It's going to be hard to beat the front five. They're very strong and they're racing up the front every week, not making mistakes. That's ultimately what we need to make sure we do on car 3.

THE MODERATOR: In general, the confidence, the comfort factor for you this year, what is the difference there for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I don't know. I feel a lot more at home with everything. Even off track it's great. Going to the tracks I understand bit more. Got my bus set up now which is really nice to have at the racetrack. In a really good head space off the track.

On track I've really gelled, pretty well-known, with my engineer Ben Bretzman, and my strategist Kyle Moyer. Got a really good team there in terms of pit stops as well.

I feel really, really and at home. I'm starting to get a feel for INDYCAR and the aggression needed and the confidence to do that, which has been a huge thing for me.

Yeah, I think two wins is probably really good. I always want to win more, but I think it was a good goal to win a race this year. We did that. To win two is fantastic. I wouldn't say my boxes are checked, but I believe we've had a really good run with it this year and something we can build into 2023.

THE MODERATOR: As noted, driving the Gallagher car in the Gallagher Grand Prix. No pressure for the home team?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was in Chicago with Gallagher a couple weeks ago to throw the first pitch in the Cubs game. They are very excited. They've come onboard in a big way. We've seen them before on Max's car. To have them with us is awesome.

They're really an enthusiastic brand, a brand that loves its INDYCAR racing, motorsports, team sport. To represent them is going to be awesome. I think you'll see they're very similar to Hy-Vee on the weekend. Like I think you'll see how passionate they are about the sport. I think they'll be around for a long time.

THE MODERATOR: What they've done so far has been tremendous, no question.

We'll open it up for questions.



Q. You are Bus Bros. Had to be a bit of a strange situation. What has that whole thing with Josef been like for you, worrying about Josef, wondering what's going on?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, he's obviously a very close friend of mine. We obviously do the Bus Bros and stuff together, and teammates, whatever. Ultimately when I found out what happened, it was a bit of a shock to the system, not just for me but everyone. Main thing is just wanted him to be okay.

For more reports? To be honest, I haven't spoken to him personally. I've let him go to it. I've texted Ashley and his father Joey. It sounds like he's just typical Josef, just fighting, doing his thing. I hope he just gets better soon. I'm sure we'll see him on Thursday and it will be great to catch up.

Q. You're also pretty close with Blaney. This is a crossover weekend. How much are you looking forward to this crossover weekend with NASCAR and seeing your Penske teammates, the stockcars?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I'm excited. I mean, last year we saw each other a little bit at the track. This year it's going to be a little different. Like I said before, I've got my bus there, so we'll probably see each other at night, hang out, whatever.

Obviously pretty close outside the racetrack and play a bit of golf together and whatnot. It's going to be cool to race with him.

I went home on Sunday last year because I couldn't really see much from the position I was going to be at. This year I'm staying, enjoy the whole weekend, really soak it in. For sure I'll be cheering on Penske teammates, but especially Blaney, who is a friend of mine.

Q. Will we see a Blaney guest appearance?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That's the plan. Just depends on how Josef is feeling for this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: You might need a booking agent with that show from now on.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: There's a lot of interest. As I've been saying for many weeks, it's going to the moon. People are going to be onboard.

THE MODERATOR: I heard over the weekend Ed Carpenter's son wants to be part of it now.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I didn't know about that. I know Ed wants to be a part of it. Apparently the whole Carpenter family wants to be part of it.

THE MODERATOR: Tell them get in line (laughter).

Q. Regarding Josef, we saw you at the care center on Sunday night. Did you have a chance to see him before he was transported? How did you become aware of the news?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It was actually my wife that told me something happened with Josef. But I didn't see Josef, no. I just took Joey, his dad, to the medical center. He didn't know where it was. I was actually there Saturday night so I knew exactly where it was for an IV drip.

Obviously just trying to help him as much as I could. I don't want to get involved. He's in the best care possible and I just wanted to give them the space they needed as a family. It wasn't my way. Yeah, just wanted to help where I could.

Obviously at that point, yeah, like I said, it was a big shock what happened because obviously he got cleared and whatnot. Just these freak accidents happen. The main thing is we just want him to be okay, yeah.

Q. Being a driver in the series, he was transported because they didn't have the imaging at the care center. Are you okay with how it was handled, with the safety level, or would you like to see more at track?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, it's tough. I think they do a tremendous job, INDYCAR, everyone, to make sure we have the best care possible. I think even just having a chopper there on the weekend is a good deal regardless.

Sometimes it's hard. Certain incidents, freak accidents, you can't prepare for. Maybe this changes things in a way that tracks are prepared for certain bits and pieces.

I know for a fact an MRI machine is a pretty big machine. Might be difficult to have at the track. The main thing is we have true professionals and the right care for us when needed at the track.

If the call is to be put on an air ambulance, like a helicopter, that's the call. I back our safety crews 100%. They've been great for me. I've openly tweeted about it all year, about how thorough they are, how quick they are to respond to our race cars when we have a crash, when we need anything. My mom has been sore the last little bit with her shoulder. The medical team at INDYCAR have

been fantastic looking after her. She's obviously not even a driver.

I'm very privileged to be part of this community. Yeah, it's a hard thing. It's very circumstantial, that answer.

Q. There's a chance because of Josef, might have a different driver working with you this weekend. Any thoughts or concerns?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, man, I haven't discussed much. I've just been focused on my job. Obviously we know Santino is on standby. I don't know Santino that well. Just raced with him and stuff like that.

Yeah, I mean, I guess for all of us at Penske, we really hope Josef's going to be okay. He's right in the thick of the championship. We hope he gets cleared to race. That's the ultimate for all of us at Penske.

But the team has had to go out and have a Plan B. That's just part of it. We all understand that. Yeah, I just really hope Josef's back. If it does happen that Santino subs in for him, we'll work with him just like any other teammate.

Q. How do you think the track at Indy would have evolved since you were there in May when the temperatures were cooler than at the moment, the mixture that's happened since the 500? Do you expect the track to be different? If so, does that change what you do in terms of preparation?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, we're actually rolling with a very similar setup in some ways because we actually looked at the temperatures and they are actually cooler than what we had in May, which is surprising. It was a freak week we had there in May.

But I think, yeah, it's going to be interesting. Obviously last year we found out the NASCAR rubber was a little bit different on the track, how it felt for me in the race car.

Practice and qualifying, we're really the only cars on track until after qualifying. From a pure speed perspective, we won't really know what the track's going to do until we get out for warmup in the morning, on Sunday morning. The race is actually straight after NASCAR qualifying.

Yeah, it's a little bit more of a punch in the dark because our car setup is a little bit different than last year. But I think we're just going to go there with a very similar philosophy to what we had in May.

Q. For you personally, your mum and dad only have a couple races left before they have to head home,

90-day mark. Have you enjoyed having them around? Obviously you have. A fun period for you and everybody?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, it's been fun. We've had a lot of laughs. Mum and dad for them to see and understand INDYCAR a bit more. I think they even (indiscernible) because it's their last night in Charlotte here for them before they checked out. They understand the racing a lot more.

Going back to watching in New Zealand, they're going to be a lot more understanding of the strategy, what goes on, especially during ovals. I think it's awesome to have a firsthand experience how it felt for them.

Look, I am 29 years old, though. Living with your parents for as long as we have, it does get on your nerves after a while smile. I'm sad to see them go, but I'm kind of like it's enough (laughter).

I'm being honest. They know as much as I do.

Q. You're going to check out your mate Blaney in the NASCAR race. Another mate you may know, Michael Peckins is another Kiwi you can go and support.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I didn't know Michael was racing this weekend. Yeah, yeah, that's wicked. Are they racing this weekend?

THE MODERATOR: It's Wednesday and Thursday on the dirt track.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Okay, I'll go check that out. I'll be right there. I didn't know that. I'll make sure I'll go say hello to Michael. He's a great guy. Helped me out with a couple charity things I had in New Zealand. Probably one of the best midget drivers in the world. Yeah, I'm excited you let me know.

THE MODERATOR: I should point out it's next Wednesday and Thursday.

We'll continue with questions.

Q. Looking through the Firestone Pit Performance Award stuff, your crew has the most times in the top five this season. Does that give you a lot of confidence?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, honestly like that's a great question because I've been wanting to talk about it. They have been awesome all year. I think we've led the pit stop competition all year, which is a testament to those guys.

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I said to them in a text last week, every time I go into pit lane, I don't worry about what's going to happen. Unfortunately we had a moment last weekend, and they (indiscernible) straightaway to be second on pit road Sunday.

I texted them, These things happen, we're going to get through this as a team. I'm one of the only drivers that go down pit road and don't have to worry about what's going to happen next in this pit stop or what is going to hold me up or whatever. As long as I know I stop on my marks, I have one of the greatest crews in pit lane to get me going.

Very privileged to have that. I hope for their sake we can keep on keeping on and get those points, be the champion at the end of the year. I think that's a great reward for them.

Q. We saw how much that emotion came out of you getting that first win. Now that you have a second under your belt, does the third win you're searching for almost have more of a desire than the first now that you tasted it?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think just every win, man, it's a pretty boring answer, but that's what you go out there to do, you go out there to win.

I understood, like, victory lane, what it was all about, more so in the second win. So sort of understand the festivities, hat dances, whatever you got to do. St. Pete was just a whirlwind in terms of what happened.

You could say it was unexpected, as well. We poled it, but at the same time it's a lot to put a race together in INDYCAR. That was just a really, really special moment in my career, my life. I'll never, ever forget that one.

Now sort of for me I look at it as business as usual. I'll celebrate the wins as much as I can, but at the same time I'm expecting for myself, I expect myself to go out there and I've got a car that's good enough to win the race, win the race.

That's how I've always been. I've been very lucky to have cars that have allowed me to do that. Yeah, it's all part of it. Just keep ticking them off hopefully one by one.

Q. Pato mentioned he can swing for the fences trying to get in the championship race. You've had some good finishes here lately. Do you have to shift to get back in a championship fight, might have to go off strategy or do things differently to get more wins?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I don't think we need to be silly. Our ultimate goal, we'd like to be in the top five of the championship. To win the championship would be an absolute bonus, absolutely. We'll literally do the best thing we can, at the same time doing what we need to do for the team as well.

We're focused on just getting the most out of it. If we need to take a risk here or there, we're in a position that we're able to do that. So it's a little bit less I guess consequence if something does happen for us.

Yeah, you got to control that risk versus reward. But we definitely look at it now where maybe we can have a risk here or there.

Q. If you look at the race titles for this weekend, it's all Penske products. Does this mean more coming here this weekend in terms of more pride? The guy that signs your check also owns the track.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, yeah, it's very different now. We know how much that place means to Roger. I said to my mum and dad the other day, I'd love to win here. Regardless if it's the 500 month, month of May, whatever. Just to win at Indianapolis would be very, very special.

On this weekend we saw Austin do it last year, won the Xfinity race. I think it would be really cool to be able to -- I think Will, as well, Will won the INDYCAR race. I think it just would be really cool to etch your name into the winner's circle in Indy. Especially now with Roger owning the place.

There's definitely a NASCAR-INDYCAR competition between the team, which is a great thing. That's what Roger always eggs on. It's a friendly rivalry, but we all want to do really, really well for him at his circuit.

Q. Any friendly wagers between the drivers?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Can't disclose that (smiling). No, we're all pretty aboveboard. We had a good chat, me and Blaney, pretty good friends. We poke a bit of the crap out of each other, have a bit of fun.

Probably more as a Chevy INDYCAR versus NASCAR golf tournament on Sunday. Probably even more competitive than the actual race itself, especially within myself.

THE MODERATOR: Who is the odds-on favorite among the Chevy drivers?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Probably myself. I play pretty good. I'm not going to lie. Normally when there's a little bit

on the line, I stress a little bit. So we'll see.

Q. From your point of view, how good is it for you to get the wins and prove guys like Roger Penske and Tim Cindric were right for bringing you over to the States?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's a big deal. You have a lot of pressure on yourself to compete and win and do bits and pieces.

To finally do it is obviously a massive weight off the shoulders, particularly St. Pete was huge for me, but to win again at Mid-Ohio not only proved it to myself but a couple others that it wasn't just a flash in the pan or a lucky weekend.

All year we've been in the spot during the races to be in the top five. I think that's a testament to how myself and Ben are working, how I'm getting entwined with the team, definitely sort of finding a bit more confidence, a bit more confidence in my feedback, a bit more confidence in what I'm saying about the race car.

That only adds to my driver confidence to add to what I do on the racetrack. Once I'm comfortable, I get more and more comfortable, hopefully we get more and more results as we go.

Q. What is the feeling like in the camp at the moment? 86 points behind the leader. Championship still an attainable goal for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, if we get on a bit of a roll. I'm going to all tracks right now I feel really comfortable with. Indy, Nashville, Gateway, Laguna and Portland, all these tracks last year, this is where I sort of got on my roll a little bit, started really building up for 2022.

Really excited to hit these tracks, go top five for the rest of the year, maybe squeeze in a couple wins. I definitely think that's attainable. There's a huge amount of confidence.

Like I said, we can risk a little more if we need. We're in a position 86 points off, we have nothing to lose. One bad race, we're sort of out of it. We have to go after it, see what we've got.

Yeah, I'd love to be in the top five, love to win the championship. But a top five would be a big tick in the box.

Q. Anything fundamentally different between this year and last to make that next step?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think I just have taken a chill pill, man. Gone back, just enjoyed life a bit, enjoyed what I'm doing, believe in myself, believe in why I've been brought here by Roger and Tim.

Yeah, I don't know. I just like I'm just a lot more at ease with the whole situation of living here in America. I'm a lot more at ease with where I am at in my development. Probably putting less pressure on myself, which is helping as well.

Yeah, it's been a lot of fun this year. I've enjoyed it. Really enjoyed working with Ben. He's been great with me. I got my feet on the ground here in America. Yeah, I feel a lot more at home.

Q. Are you still using a sports psychologist?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I'm still using one.

Q. On your latest Bus Bros, there's a question there who you would love to see from another series come and join INDYCAR, Shane obviously your pick. Elaborate on that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I just think he's a shoo-in. He drives anything very well. I think it would be pretty cool for him to just try INDYCAR. Yeah, he's a bigger dude, but I think he would be fine. We see Graham Rahal is about the same size as him. I think it would be a really cool thing for him to do. I'd fully support it if he got in, for sure.

Q. Could you pull some strings and get him a test?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, he can figure that out himself.

THE MODERATOR: You're in seventh in points. You look up, everyone else has got some race wins, outside of maybe Alex. Someone's going to have to put together a couple wins in the last five races to get the championship, aren't they?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. You're past the point of relying on luck right now. Wins are going to do it. Wins are going to separate you from all of us. Either the wins are going to get back into contention, and we saw at that Mid-Ohio when I won, 10th to sixth, I was right there. Things can change pretty quickly.

I fully believe if we got on a roll, potentially got top threes for the rest of the year, you never know where that puts you. That's a lot of points. That's just our goal.

THE MODERATOR: You get to the point of the season where it's almost all or nothing if you want to win the



championship. It's tight, too.

Q. This weekend you'll be dealing with the Goodyear rubber on the track from the NASCAR guys. How much does that change the track? Does that change your approach or strategy in any way?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's obviously a big change-up. We noticed it last year, first time racing on the Goodyear rubber. The Firestone rubber seems to come back pretty well. We're able to feel okay.

It just takes a couple laps for the tires to rubber in. But we've got obviously the black and the red compound with Firestone this weekend.

Yeah, like I said, we're going to be running on that compound on the Firestone tires more so than the NASCAR Goodyear stuff till after qualifying. Qualifying it's going to be an INDYCAR track. Afternoon it turns more into NASCAR running.

We won't have to worry about it till Saturday, it will be in a bit in the back of our mind.

Q. We've seen a lot of things happen this season. One of the best seasons I've seen in INDYCAR. You're a part of that. What do you think seeing the season overall was the most challenging thing to you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think probably the most challenging thing has been just being consistent week in, week out. One, it's so hard to be consistent, but if you can it reaps really good rewards. I think you've seen that with Marcus. I think he's done a tremendous job with how consistent he's been. It's been a testament to him and his team how they've been running.

The name of the game is just that consistency that we saw, what we're seeing with Marcus and Palou last year. But, yeah, it's tough to get. That's, yeah, probably the toughest thing, trying to keep on keeping on.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everybody, for joining us. Thanks for your time, Scott.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Thanks.

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