

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 6, 2022

Scott McLaughlin

Romain Grosjean

Christian Lundgaard

Pato O'Ward

Press Conference



not too far from our street course package and philosophy. So that's pretty positive.

Really yesterday was funny because we made that change, one driver would say, I have a good front end now. We looked at the data, it's the same.

Yes, we brought it to a good place. I got the confidence going into the corner from the front, the front has to turn. Obviously on a street course that make a huge difference.

Q. Did the rain help?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, it was boring to wait. I had some fun with Rossi and Herta. We were looking at all the French words that you guys use in English. There's quite a long list.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by the pole winner for tomorrow's race, Scott McLaughlin, second career pole, 61st in your Team Penske career, which snaps the tie you previously had with Helio Castroneves. You lead the way. Congratulations for that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I really wanted that one. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Christian Lundgaard, as well, your best career starting position. The third previous best was a fourth at IMS on the road course last year.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: A year ago today. I believe it was today, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, your thoughts about P1?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, just stoked, man. The car has been just absolutely phenomenal all weekend since we really rolled out the truck. We massaged it overnight, came out with a beauty today. Really haven't touch it apart from a little bit of front wing.

It's a credit to Ben and then the team, DEX Imaging Chevy car is good. I'm really excited for tomorrow. I think it's obviously going to be a pretty blockbuster, crazy race. To start from the front, last year I think I started from Narnia last year, I don't know where I was. I was 20th. So it's

THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying, we'll start with Romain Grosjean, his best starting position of the season. That's a look.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I just realize what you say. It's not pretty.

It's good. It feels good. I think we've made a lot of work. We've had a fair bit of issues recently on different level. But, during practice we made a few changes to the car. It came to life. And I liked it.

From there we worked. Made a setup change. Thanks to my boys because they've been working really hard recently. It just feels bloody good to have some fun back behind the wheel, being able to do what I like.

THE MODERATOR: Good omen for tomorrow? Can you win this thing?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I think anyone can win this thing if you're a lap down and you have a stop-and-go.

We're definitely in a good position. Penske has been really strong this season, whole season, but this weekend... We'll see. But we've definitely picked up the pace during qualifying. We've had some good practice session. We obviously going to make few changes for tomorrow, including putting the AC in the car, go from there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You talked about setup adjustments on the car. How much did you really have to fine-tune from yesterday, especially with the rain?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, quite a bit. We ended up



... when all is said, we're done.®

going to be a lot easier to start, control the pace hopefully, and see where we go.

THE MODERATOR: For you, Christian, this is the continuation of the little run that not only you but this race team is on right now.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, wish it doesn't stop for a number of races. It's been good. Looking at our first Fast Six last weekend, carrying it into this weekend. We were quick straightaway in practice yesterday and kind of carried it on into qualifying. I messed up early in Q2, locked up and caused the yellow for Pato, had to do a drive-through.

Coming out there on the greens, just getting that lap in early, then hoping it was going to stick, and it did, it was quite nerve-wracking at that point.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Christian, a year ago you had your debut here. Last week you kicked it up a notch. How close do you feel you are to getting a victory?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I guess we'll see tomorrow.

Honestly, I don't know. I mean, the pace is there. Obviously I don't think there was much more in it today. I think I maximized what the car had, especially in Fast Six.

I think the race pace will be quite interesting. I think it's going to be a black race, so I think tomorrow morning we'll for sure make sure the car works on that compound.

Q. (No microphone.)

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I must say it was very understeer-y after that. Kind of shaking the whole way back of the bridge. I was kind of worried because that's kind of a right kink breaking into nine, so I was a bit worried locking the right front again there. So I just took it easy and made sure I got the car into the pit lane.

Obviously for confidence that didn't help going down there the next lap. But my engineer told me right after that I actually ended up braking later on the second lap. I mean, it's a good execution.

Q. Scott, pole here. This could be a crazy race. Four races to go. Team Penske is definitely strong at Gateway. Do you feel you still have an outside shot at this championship with where you are starting tomorrow?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, the belief is there absolutely. I've said it all along, I feel like a little bit of an underdog in this. There's no reason why we can't go on a run. These are four tracks that I really enjoy.

I mean, Gateway we ran fourth. Portland I out-qualified my teammates. Feel like our cars are quicker there this year. No reason why we can't be fast there again. Laguna, I love that track. I just made a mess of qualifying, as I did all last year.

Really excited for this final run. Anything can happen. It's INDYCAR. We have a solid week, focus on ourselves, who knows what will happen.

Yeah, certainly a position I'm not unfamiliar with, that's for sure.

Q. Romain and Christian, you are on the outside of all of this. What have you made of the chaos going on in the Formula 1 world, not being part of it?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: My Super License is still valid. I still have a shot.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I don't have one.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think I've got one. I think I can get one.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: There you go. Give you a few phone numbers.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Roger is a nice guy.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, they just (indiscernible), didn't they? Déjà vu. Another French word.

Q. (No microphone.)

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: There are none.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Pato O'Ward, fifth in the championship. He'll start fifth tomorrow.

Advancing to the Firestone Fast Six, fifth place, you'll take it I'm assuming?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, we'll take it. I think tomorrow's race is going to be maybe not quite as hectic as last year, but I think it's going to be pretty crazy.

It's pretty unpredictable out there. I think all you guys can agree, no?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: If it rains, for sure.

PATO O'WARD: Oh, it's going to rain. Even better (smiling).

So, yeah, we'll take that. I think we can work from there, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for all four.

Q. Scott, you had a forgettable race here last year. How do you prepare mentally to come back this year?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, just another race, man. I think we just knew we had (indiscernible). It was a matter of getting a car that could feel a bit more at home with. I liked the track instantly. Yeah, just put it together once we got here.

No, I feel really ready to go for tomorrow. Felt ready to go for this weekend. Can't wait for what's ahead.

Q. Christian, you said you don't like street courses on the broadcast. What is it that you don't like about them?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Well, previously I didn't. I wouldn't say I had a very fun experience in Detroit this year either. We struggled for grip. On a street circuit, with the concrete barrier right around the corner, everywhere around you basically, it isn't fun not feeling that the car is very connected to the track. In that sense it's never a pleasant experience.

But lately the car has performed very well. It's been a pleasure to drive. I think we see the lap times are improving. We were strong in Toronto as well.

I'm starting to like it more and more, but I'm sure there's going to be tough days, too.

Q. (No microphone.)

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yes. I did Macau in F3.

Q. Scott, if I understand it right, leader has discretion in INDYCAR, they want you to go middle of the bridge. Josef was saying wait until the end. Do you have any plan?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Where should I go?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Let me know where you go, I'll let you go first into turn nine, then we will work from that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We will sort it out. I'm a nice guy. Don't know what you're talking about.

Yeah, I don't know. I got to look back at the notes honestly. I look at that briefly. If we qualify well, I'll focus on that and see where I'm going to go.

Q. You haven't even thought about it?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, nothing. I'm just glad that the race starts on that side. I think it's going to make it flow a lot better, help the race get going, get into a bit of a rhythm. I'm sure there's going to be a few dive bombs out there, but I'm sure it's going to be fine.

Q. When it's different like that, the front row...

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: The good thing about a rolling start, if you have a four seater, it's really easy. It's really easy.

So for me it's just a matter of trying to follow him when he goes, stay second. You can tell with the old guys when they normally like to go because they've had a lot of history from starting at the front. I am sure with Scott it is going to be all good. The race is 80 laps. It's not the first 500 meters that matter, or whatever that is.

Q. Pato, in the morning practice you looked like you were pretty hot. You said they don't let you run a cool suit.

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, we don't have them. It's horrible in the car. It's unbearable. Like, I think this is probably going to be the worst race. Yeah, I cannot explain how horrendous it is inside of the car.

Like tomorrow they'll probably mandate the roof scoops. But, yeah, I mean, every braking zone, I'm having to clear my sweat because there's no ventilation in the car. Every braking zone, even with me trying to clear it out, I'm still like splatting sweat all over my visor. It's horrible.

Q. Is that a team performance thing?

PATO O'WARD: No. I think first of all we don't have the systems. Two, I think as a team we just haven't looked into it. We have sort of, but, yeah, we don't have 'em here. Maybe something to look into next year for sure.

I didn't think it was going to be this bad. It's worse than what I remember last year being. It's really, really bad.

Q. With all of you being in group two, did you learn anything from the cars that went out before you guys with all the rain washing away the rubber on the track?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, just surprised by the difference of pace. I think they did a 6 something and we went straight into 5.1.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Showed how much the track had lost grip. As soon as there was a run on it, it was pretty quick. I think a second run for them would have been pretty similar to a first run for us probably.

Q. Christian, at the last INDYCAR street race, Graham talked about the test at Sebring changed a lot of things at the Rahal team. We saw that at Indy. What did you see there and Toronto and Indy that has helped bring the team along?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: No, honestly I think it's a lot about understanding. I mean, it is. I wasn't expecting to be that quick yesterday. Anyway...

Honestly, the test was good for us. We were basically the three cars on track. We only had ourselves to compare to and each other. I think it was just important for us to do the run plan that was planned and get through it and have the data on it.

I mean, like Graham said, it seems to work. I'm sure we have found some stuff that works. Looking at Toronto, it was a huge increase in performance compared to Detroit. It translates to here.

Q. Pato, starting in the second row for this race, knowing where you are in the championship, is this starting to become an almost must-win?

PATO O'WARD: I feel like this year, whether you start -- I mean, the worst crash last year, or I guess the worst crash that could continue, won last year. I guess it doesn't really matter where you start, thinking of what the history has been here.

It's a good place to start. There's just going to be I think a lot of yellows. Maybe I'll be proven wrong. I don't think we're going to go full green. I just don't see that happening with how hot it's getting inside the cars, with how long the races are, with how hot it's going to be. People are going to get tired, touch a wall here or there. There's going to be mishaps for sure.

You can be pole, you can be second or third. We're starting in the first three rows. A yellow falls not in your favor, you're going straight to the back.

I think tomorrow it's going to be all about nailing and having some Lady Luck with the strategy because I don't think it's going to matter where you start. I think someone with a good car in the back, they nail on a good yellow, they're going to go straight to the front and they're going to stay there.

Q. Scott, if we get a mixed bag weather-wise tomorrow, what's that going to do to the grip levels, bearing in mind there's different types of surfaces around this track? Is that going to upset the balance of the car for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, no doubt it's going to be a pretty crazy race. Last year's was pretty long in bone-dry conditions. I'm sure with a little bit of rain it's going to be crazy.

A lot of painted lines in the middle of apexes here on tight corners with no room for error. I sort of looked at that before. I thought we might have had a bit of wet then. I was trying to figure out where the lines were and whatnot.

Yeah, it's pretty crazy. We'll see what happens during the race.

Q. Watching in the sessions, it reminds me a lot of the backside of the Adelaide street circuit. Probably with the impact you're seeing in terms of ventilation, how hot you're getting in the car...

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's pretty warm. The biggest problem is the humidity, I think. When you slow down and come into the pits, the heat soak just builds so quickly.

But I'm sort of like ever since my Super Car days have always been a guy that doesn't wear a cool suit because I think it's worse if you have one fail. It's just boiling water rolling around your body.

I'm actually okay with running the top duct and the helmet fan, or the helmet air. But it's going to be a hot race. Like Pato said, it's going to be the hottest race that we've had. Hopefully with all the training all season is going to set us up well for that and we'll be all right.

Q. For you young guys, what do you think of the vibe of this event? Is it really kind of a place...

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm still in my 20s, but that's fine. Don't worry about me (laughter).

PATO O'WARD: The vibe's dope, bro.

Q. Is it almost difficult to not want to go out?

PATO O'WARD: Oh, I'm not a big party-er.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, sure.

PATO O'WARD: No, seriously. I enjoy staying in my hotel. I love the food that's around here. There's some great spots. I'm going to a great one tonight. I forgot the name. It's a sushi/Chinese.

Q. Really in the heart of everything in Nashville. All you have to do is go across the river...

PATO O'WARD: These guys are doing it right. The guys here from this event and what Hy-Vee did in Iowa, they packed up a place in Newton, Iowa. Like if you can pack up a place in Newton, Iowa, you can pack up any other place that we go. They did a phenomenal job.

I think everyone can learn from what they're doing. Like, it's what it should be. The standard should be this. Yesterday, even Friday, there was quite a bit of people coming out to watch for a Friday. Today was even better. I'm sure tomorrow's going to be fantastic.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I think Pato covered it.

Q. When you're this close to this much activity, you think, I wish I could just go out?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I only just turned 21, so I'm new to this.

Yeah, no, I don't like going out. I'm kind of a staying home guy, then having a beer with my friends back home. Which we are allowed where I come from, before I turned 21. That's always been my preference. I don't like going out clubbing. It's always too loud. You got to find a way to go home, you know?

PATO O'WARD: Scottie likes it, I can tell.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: My wife is probably having more fun than any of us. She comes straight in from Broadway. She's having a good time. But we're all good. She's a superstar. Definitely loves this race. Josef is definitely trying to sell the dream about living here, that's for sure.

Q. (No microphone.)

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. I think I've said it once and I'll say it again, it's going to be a sold-out show when we go. I don't see it not working out because I know the whole country is super up on all the F1 stuff, racing

there. I think if INDYCAR goes there, the series as a whole is going to gain a ton of fans.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Let's do it before F1 then.

PATO O'WARD: During the year?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Do it before F1 goes there.

PATO O'WARD: That's what I'm saying. It also depends, maybe it can be Mexico City or Monterrey, my hometown. I think that could be really cool for INDYCAR to go to Monterrey. If it's a success, maybe a street course in Cancun or something. That would be good, huh? You like Mexico?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Mexico City wasn't my favorite. I've never been anywhere else. I can't tell you much about it.

PATO O'WARD: To-do list. Add it on there.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yes. Miami is not far.

PATO O'WARD: You'll love it. It's awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time.

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