

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, September 11, 2022

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Obviously joined by the 2022 NTT INDYCAR Series champion in Will Power, now a two-time champion in INDYCAR with the win. Nine podiums here in 2022, and of course five NTT P1 awards, snapping Mario Andretti's all-time pole record yesterday.

That seemed like a long time ago compared to what you just did today. Congratulations. Third-place finish.

It's Will's ninth podium of the season, 94th of your career. I know it's been a long day for you. How satisfying, where do you start when you try to describe something like this, what happened today?

WILL POWER: Yeah, what a great weekend all around. I couldn't really enjoy the pole yesterday because I was so focused on the race.

A lot of stress. A lot of stress this weekend. Not really any other -- I was pretty calm all year. Once I got in the car and we started rolling, it was fine. A bit sketchy in the middle of the race. I was digging --

THE MODERATOR: How nerve-racking?

WILL POWER: Deep, just I've got to give everything I can. I can't lose any position here, and the car was -- the tires, yeah, it was interesting. Some sets of tires were really good, and some were not quite so good. A bit of a difference there.

But yep, mentally drained. Couldn't show the sort of emotion that I showed when I won the 500.

But it's been like a long journey over the year. I think it's pretty fitting that we just did another solid day, just a sort of long-game day like today. That's just been the story of our year.

Q. Coming in, you knew if I finish on the podium, we've got the championship. Palou goes by you, Josef goes by you, you're sitting on the bubble right there. Is that where the nerves started to kick in?

WILL POWER: That was the nerves coming in because Josef and I were on the same tires and he pulled a 12-second gap which just blew my mind. Then the next set of tires, suddenly I was actually quicker than him. It was a bit confusing to me because I just figured he was on reds but he wasn't.

Yeah, car came alive in the last stint and no problem.

Q. I saw a banner afterwards, 42nd championship for Team Penske. You're a part of that, obviously. You join a list of multiple championship winners from the team, guys like Rick Mears, who won three INDYCAR Series championships, Tom Sneva won a couple, Al Unser won a couple, Gil de Ferran, your teammate Josef Newgarden. That's an elite racing team.

WILL POWER: It is, yeah, all very elite, and just so fortunate to drive for such a team, being given the chance to do this. A lot of gratitude. A lot of gratitude to the team and the sponsors, Verizon. Very lucky.

Q. We saw you making quite a few changes to your car in warmup. Did they make the car better, or did they make it worse, and that's why the car's handling was so tricky?

WILL POWER: The car was actually really good in the last stint. Just went back to last year's setup with a little bit of a change. Yeah, a bit of -- we just went from what we ran in qualifying to what we ran in the race last year, which seemed pretty strong. Yeah, it was tough, man. Those two black stints, I just touched the throttle and the thing was sliding. It was really on top of the road. I took some front wing out, and that second stint, then you just didn't have front and you didn't have rear, but as the stint went on, it got a bit better.

But then the last stint, the car came on. We put the front wing back in.

Yeah, it was interesting. I was surprised how much better the tire was in the last stint for me.

Q. Were the team constantly warning you what the gap was back to Grosjean or back to Rosenqvist?



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WILL POWER: I was watching on my dash. I got it on my dash so I could tell how fast someone is, and once that sort of stabilized with Grosjean, I thought, okay, I'm looking not bad here.

And the fact that they said that Palou is 20 seconds up the road, I was like, well, if something doesn't happen to him, you still have to try and maintain our position if it goes yellow or there's a restart or any of that because it just can mix it all up.

Yeah, it's just -- I have to say, I dug deep all year, fought hard all year, and that was the case today again.

Q. Where is it that you pinpoint during the season that you thought this was going to happen, or was it just today's race? Was it just a consistency between Team Penske and Team Chevy, as well, throughout the year?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we definitely took a big jump on drivability with the engine. That really, really helped this year, put our cars in a different window.

As far as knowing when I had the championship? About two to go, one to go. That's about how it felt. I've been in positions where I've had races won and then something has happened.

Yeah, never -- started to look good with 10 to go, but yeah, we turned up the last three races on our game in every respect. Getting the pole at Gateway, leading the most laps, but then obviously a wrong strategy call there, otherwise I feel like we would have won that race.

Then Portland on the front row, and then on the podium and then here again. Definitely turned up in the last three ready to go, not leaving anything on the table, not having to claw from the back or anything. Yeah, that was my mindset going into it.

Q. Will, this championship you didn't put the top of the trophy on your head like you did in 2014. Are you learning how to celebrate championships a little differently now than that first one?

WILL POWER: I'm much older. I'm much older. That was Cindric's fault. He told me to do that.

Q. But I know that that championship was the release of a lot of torment that you felt inside because you'd never won a championship before. You'd come close. We never really know who would have won the 2011 championship because of the way the season ended. 2012 you weren't -- you lost it, 2013 you were out of it,

and then 2014 you were able to seal it. Were there any moments today where there was any reflections of, I can't let one wheel get turned the wrong way today?

WILL POWER: Hmm, that's kind of been all year. You've done it for long enough, you just iron out all those little stupid mistakes that potentially -- that you have made over your career. Everyone does.

That's what I did, I have done all year. It's been a really focused, solid year all around. Great crew, finished every lap of every race.

We look back at a couple of these years and some of the mechanical failures, some of the things that have gone wrong, it just shows when you've got the whole combination together, we're going to be there fighting for the championship.

Q. When Newgarden came all the way from the back to the front and then got ahead of you, was there any moment where you wondered, like, how did he do that?

WILL POWER: No, I knew he was going to be there. I knew it. It's pretty crazy, though, I actually put him a lap down, right? Was that right? He had pit -- no, that's wrong. I pitted and came out in front of him, so I actually got a whole pit stop on him but then that yellow would have closed him up significantly and would have helped him. But after that, I was like, ooh, we've got to dig deep here, just keep digging, and that's what I did.

Q. You didn't have Beau when you won in '14 and he got to celebrate with you today. How special was that?

WILL POWER: It's special every time I see the little guy. Doesn't matter if it's a championship or just getting up in the morning. Just, yeah, God, it's the best.

Q. How do you and Faustino keep things as fresh as you have for all these years? That's not a common thing.

WILL POWER: Yeah, no, I want to say that we just know each other well. We actually worked better this year together than ever, really. We really did.

I think he's seen me mature. Think about it, he's been with me since '07, so I think he's probably seen a slow progression of maturity, and this year he's seen absolutely top level of that because he's obviously heard me on the radio for years, he's heard me -- he's been in that engineering office for years.

Yeah, and I think we both have together -- we've got a lot of respect for each other. It's just, you cannot beat experience. You cannot beat experience. That's all I'll say. Every scenario that can happen to you to make a race go wrong has happened to me and him, and it happens to everyone, and just at this stage of your career, you just know the game so well.

Yeah, and you just play on that experience.

Q. Can you also share some thoughts about your crew chief Trevor, just a big bear of a guy, smile from ear to ear. Today was a big achievement for him in his career, as well.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I've had a few different crew chiefs, but I would say that he is the most positive, lighthearted guy I've had and very nurturing just with the guys. I think everyone is happy on the crew.

I've had crew chiefs that were really tough on the guys. They demand everyone to really do their job properly. But Trev is just -- he's a great guy, a great human, and very good at his job, and he keeps everyone calm, including me. He just says, just do what you do, man; nothing special. I've been saying that, too, on the radio. We come in for a stop, nothing special, boys, just do what you know.

My outside rear guy it was his first year and they were the quickest on pit lane, I believe. I think they won the pit stop competition. That's a first-year guy. He's a good friend of mine, Adam Jarrett. They're all good friends of mine, but that's impressive.

Q. I know Team Penske obviously doesn't play favorites. That's been evident in all the discussions that have been had over the last week, especially since Portland. But when you have one win and Newgarden has got five and McLaughlin has got three, does it make you anxious at all? Does it feel awkward that you're leading the points and you're the guy who's going to win the championship, but would you like to have more wins to kind of show -- I know there's no No. 1 driver, but how does that feel?

WILL POWER: Nine podiums, that's pretty strong. Definitely gave up some wins just for consistency. Definitely could have attacked harder when I was on really good tires.

I know the races -- St. Pete was won on the restart. I actually just underdrove like you wouldn't believe to make sure that I finished that stint in a good position instead of -- I could have easily attacked and passed McLaughlin. Instead I actually lost a position on reds.

The other one was Mid-Ohio, restart on reds and just attack here or I can end up -- I think I'll take third. Same with the second race at Iowa. I'll take second. Make sure the tires last, make sure I finish second. There's definitely some wins left on the table if you were going for that.

But I've said it from the beginning of the year, I said, I'm playing the long game all year. I've never done that, and I'm doing it this year. I don't really care about the wins; I just want to win another championship, and I played that game. Maybe I go out next year and try to win races.

You know, yeah. If you want to win a championship, you've got to play a long game.

Q. You said on the NBC interview with Marty that Liz had told you you were going to break Mario's record and you were going to win the championship.

WILL POWER: She said that. She said, I believe -- because there's probably a time where I was disappointed in something or just saying like -- talking about my career or something. She goes, I believe you're going to beat Mario's record this year and win another championship. That's what she said. Legit, she said that. She said that a couple times in the year, and it actually gave me confidence. It actually like -- that's how much faith I have in her gut feel. It kind of made me feel, okay, yeah, she's said things like this before. Like the 500, she said, I believe you're going to win one. I think you're going to win one.

Q. You don't remember where you were?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I do. We were standing in the kitchen. I remember it exactly.

Q. Just some point during the off-season? Was it in December or January --

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was -- she had said it a couple times, but I know it was before the season, and she said it again during the season. Even before this weekend, she said, I know you're going to do it. She said that. I know you're going to do it. Man, it's so much pressure -- not pressure, but everything has got to go right. But deep down, I was like, I know how life flows at times, and I kind of thought that this could happen.

But yeah, she said that. Yeah, she has a good gut feel, a good gut feel for things.

Q. You've said a couple of times here, you said yesterday, you haven't really been able to fully show



your emotions because you've been in locked-in serious mode all week. When do you get to let loose?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I don't know. Just a great feeling of satisfaction. Yeah, I don't really drink or anything. I'll have some green teas tonight and enjoy it. I got in the ocean for 30 minutes. That was cold. I think it's 50 degrees. I stayed in for 30. My dad is like, don't get in for more than 15.

Q. Earlier in the race, I believe you exited one of your pit stops behind Kellett and then you had Daly a couple seconds in front of you; you were worried about getting help, getting by them. How worried were you something was going to happen at that point that maybe things were going to go haywire completely?

WILL POWER: My worry was I had a two-second gap on Grosjean and I wanted to make sure I jumped him in the stop. That was my worry. I was like, this second-second gap, I don't want to get held up. That was really my only worry.

Q. Looking at the whole season, what was the thing that surprised you the most about everything? Was it Scott and what he did or was there something else that happened that surprised you most of all?

WILL POWER: I think based -- I actually felt like we didn't have a bad car last year, it just seemed like bad luck as a team. This year everything just seemed to click. I don't know whether that surprises me or not.

I would say the most -- not even surprising this year. The competition is just insane.

But what's maybe surprising is the gap we had to the field as a team. We just seemed to execute in every way. Not necessarily faster -- well, we were faster in some respects, some races, but just getting it right, pit lane and on track.

Q. Will, I know they showed some clips on the pre-race show on the grid, and at least to us it looked like you were very nervous, very focused. Can you kind of describe what the emotions were like leading up to the start of today's race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was waking up at 3:00 a.m. a couple times over the weekend, and you can always relax yourself back to sleep, but it's obviously a big day. Everyone has put a ton of effort in, and you don't want to let it go. Those nerves make you perform at a high level.

I had those nerves going into qualifying. It just pumps you up to another level. That's what it does for me.

A couple of times in my career I've actually gotten in the car too relaxed, and it just doesn't work. I've been around long enough to understand the perfect amount of sort of nervousness you've got to have. You've got to have it. You've got to have it. Your subconscious won't perform to what you want it to if you don't. Your subconscious needs to understand the importance of what you're doing and then you can put yourself at another level.

Q. Talk about the faith that you put in Liz and her gut feelings; they talked in the pre race today about very early in your career, Liz talked you out of taking other jobs and to stick around and wait for an opportunity in INDYCAR.

WILL POWER: Yeah, that was true, too.

Q. So you believed her long before she was your wife or even your girlfriend. What is it that has made you believe in her gut feelings?

WILL POWER: Well, things like that. I mean, legitimately told me to sign the contract for A1 GP, didn't have anything else, and she told me to get out of that contract because Penske or Ganassi might call you. I was just like, there's no way, but I did it anyway. I don't know, I just did it. Then sure enough, she goes, yeah, Helio just got arrested. I'm like, what? What? Derek is down there, he's talking to Roger -- no, it was uncanny. Unbelievable. She actually talked me out of that contract. Yeah, I did end up with Penske. It just blew my mind. How could she know that? She didn't know, she just felt that.

Q. What else has she felt? What else has she predicted?

WILL POWER: She has good intuition.

Q. You being you and you allowed yourself to get nervous this weekend; was there any point knowing you just needed to finish a certain place? Did you relax at any point during the race?

WILL POWER: I did not relax at any point. I knew I had to keep digging, and yeah, I went hard the whole race.

In that restart, Josef is P5 already, I'm like, ooh. Then he had to go another stop, but yeah, it was high stress the whole race, but remained extremely focused on it. Yeah, extracted the most out of it, and yep, it was very like our whole season. It was a very solid, consistent, no-mistake day.

Q. Do you think you've done enough to earn another

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contract?

WILL POWER: You would hope so. If not, there's plenty of teams to --

Q. Yeah? Tell us about it.

WILL POWER: McLaren, I signed with them, so...

Q. But then you'll have to deny it on Twitter like 10 minutes later.

WILL POWER: Yeah, we'll see. We'll see what happens. Yeah, you would hope so.

Q. It's been in the media here a lot recently about Formula 1 things, but INDYCAR can hold its head high when it has a champion like you and you're consistent across all the disciplines of circuits that you go to. You have to be consistent across the lot, don't you.

WILL POWER: Yeah, you do. You can't leave anything on the table. That's what makes this series so tough and unique is that you've got all these disciplines. Even the difference between a road course and a street course is quite significant in our series because the street course is extremely rough and bumpy and tight. There's not a series like it.

I'm going to say it's the toughest series in the world because of what you've got to master to win it and the competition level. You don't even have to take my word for it; just do the math on lap times, and you'll see that we're the toughest, the most competitive series in the world.

Q. When you look at it today and just using Dixon as the example as someone who qualifies midfield and you're just further up the road, again, it's that same thing, the series is so equal, people look at it and go, he's midfield but it's thousands of seconds separating you guys in qualifying.

WILL POWER: It is. When we were at Portland, I was like seven tenths covered 20 cars. Seven tenths covering 20 cars. You're never going to see that in something like Formula 1. Never. It's the ultimate driver's series. It's the ultimate driver's series.

Q. Will, you mentioned a couple of times through the year the mental approach changing, something that you learnt in the off-season or figured out in the off-season. You said that you might tell us at the end of the season if you won the series. Are you able to share that with us now, what the secret was?

WILL POWER: No, I will only say it when I retire. But yeah, definitely -- I'm older, more experienced, just know the game so well, know the correct mental approach to get the most out of myself and know when to go, when not to go, and just all those little details that you can only get by experience.

Yeah, it's a solid year all around as a group, not just me. I mean, the team have done a great job, the group that I've had on my car, the pit stops, the strategies, everything. Total team effort.

Yeah, that's the only way you'll win in this series is absolutely a group effort.

Q. How excited do you feel having in mind the strength you showed us on the last round, knowing that you have a lot of pace in quality and race for the next season?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, very encouraging for next year. I've learnt a lot this year, as well. You never stop learning. Having two really good teammates helps.

Yeah, look forward to some time off, to be honest. I haven't seen my parents in three years. I want to get back over to Australia and relax and then I'll start thinking about what happens next year.

Q. What do you think was the most satisfying moment of the whole season, not including this one?

WILL POWER: Yeah, the most satisfying race was definitely Detroit. I wanted to win that one. And winning the championship, extremely satisfying. You think about it this weekend, winning the championship and surpassing Mario Andretti in poles, very satisfying. Very satisfying.

Q. Going along that satisfying thing, we spoke at Nashville after the race, and you said, I can't wait to fight Scott Dixon for a championship. How much more satisfying is this championship knowing that you fought Scott through the rest of the way he was tied for second in points and now the title is yours?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was a hard fight to the end. You're fighting Dixon and Newgarden, like two of the best guys in the series. It's very satisfying. Very satisfying.

That matters. It's not fun -- it's fun at the time when you win with ease, but it's way better when it was a difficult fight to the end, which it was. It adds to the satisfaction.

Q. Did you ever think it was you against everyone else at Penske this year?



WILL POWER: Me against everyone else? Well, the two boys -- well, I guess they're younger and similar in age and enjoying having fun. But no. Look, I find Scott, I find McLaughlin a great guy, easy to get along with, and Josef is, as well. They're good guys. Fiercely competitive, and I expect Scott to be a legit championship contender next year.

Yeah, I said it a couple weeks ago; I'm going to say this is the strongest combination that Penske has ever had as far as driver, speed, ability. A tough group. Tough, tough trio.

Q. What about winning it with Ron Ruzewski. How big of a combination is that because for the longest time you were paired with Tim Cindric, but to be able to get Ron as the guy that works with you, and how special is it to give him this championship?

WILL POWER: It's great. It's great. Ron has been fantastic, very calm on the radio, never, ever loses his cool, puts things in perspective. Him and Dave, they're just a great group. The whole group, and Dave in particular, man. I just feel -- I really wanted to win it for him and Robby Atkinson, two guys that have been with me -- Dave has been with me the whole time but Robby since 2010. They deserved another championship. They did. These guys are extremely good at their jobs, and I didn't want to ruin it for them.

Q. I wanted to ask when you decided to go to this playing the long game thing, were they fully behind you doing that, or were there days when Dave or Robby or Ron were like, s--- we could have won that race?

WILL POWER: Look, you're never disappointed. Looking from a championship perspective, every time you get a podium, that's not the day you're looking back on it. You're looking back on the day you finished 19th like at Road America. They're the days that lose championships. Top threes don't. We got a lot of them this year. Anytime I got a top four, I was pretty happy.

But in the past I would have been really pissed off. When your teammates are winning, that was a big change. It's like, I don't care. I'm going to weather their storm while they're having a good run, and just -- that in itself was a mental change. It's like, I'm not getting pissed off with a top four, where before I would have been, just after the race, just seething.

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