

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Will Power now, obviously two-time NTT INDYCAR Series champion, massive year last year, winning his second championship, pole record, goes on and on and on. Driver of the No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet.

I know everybody has talked about the off-season, everybody is ready to get back in a car tomorrow. How excited are you to get going here?

WILL POWER: Yeah, real excited. Last time I drove the car was at Laguna, so very excited to get back in, get moving again, get things rolling.

THE MODERATOR: Can you have another year like you did last year?

WILL POWER: Of course, that's the goal. Similar approach, but every season has its flow. Sometimes -- it's never the same. Sometimes you get a runaway guy and you have to win races rather than be consistent. It just depends how it rolls, and you've got to adjust accordingly.

Q. I know you mentioned having not been in the car since you clinched the championship at Laguna. I know testing has been increasingly a little bit more limited these last couple years. What has that been like literally having not been in an INDYCAR for six months after coming off of such a high and such an important year in your career?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's the way it is these days, so you've got simulators that you can go through setup items and somewhat keep shot. It's never the same as the real car. There's no substitute for being in the real car.

But everyone is in the same boat, and you've got to make the most of these very limited days.

Q. Sounds like you're doing okay now, but you suffered that go-karting accident that was maybe a little bit painful this off-season; had to spend some time with your family, with Liz, hopefully getting better.

Where are you just from a mental standpoint here as we're getting close to kicking off this season?

WILL POWER: Yeah, good. I mean, I've been keeping on, doing all the stuff that I do. Obviously the last few weeks have been tough, staying in hospitals and working through the health issues that my wife has. That's life. It could always be worse. She's improving, and hopefully in the next four or five weeks we can get to a point where it feels safe.

Q. That was my first question, just Liz's health. So she's at home and on the mend and in a better place?

WILL POWER: Yeah, she's much better than two weeks ago, but I think we'll know for sure in five weeks whether her blood stays sterile. Yeah, she's improved significantly from -- she was almost -- she was in a pretty bad shape a couple weeks ago.

Q. This next two days at Thermal, what have you understood about why INDYCAR is doing this, what you hope to gain from it? It's a track you guys don't race at. What do you think you can gain from it, and have you studied it much yet?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think it's -- yeah, I don't know. I actually haven't asked INDYCAR why we're doing it here, but it's a nice location. I think it's a pretty nice track.

As far as what you'll get out of it is going through the motions of a race weekend basically. It's not really -- we won't know until we drive on it what it really applies to, which track would be the most similar. I'm thinking Indy road course, sort of Portland. You could probably get some stuff from it there.

I think it's getting the group together, going through the motions of getting a setup for a track, and being fast and getting back into the flow of things more than anything.

Q. How helpful is it to you to keep your race craft sharpness that GoPro is just a few miles away from Team Penske's headquarters?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I love go-karting. It's a lot of fun. It's very intense, very competitive. Also, that's somewhere



you can get some race fitness for sure because you've actually got some G-forces. The simulator you get obviously the steering so you can work on your arms, but you actually get neck and whole body in the go-kart. I just love karting. I have since I was a kid. I do it for fun, and it keeps me sharp.

Q. Also, there's a lot of professional drivers that are out there doing the same thing. Justin Marks owns the place. How fortunate is that that you get a lot of different guys from different forms of racing out there?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I see a lot of NASCAR guys out there. I know Scott McLaughlin has got a kart. A lot of the Penske mechanics go there. A lot of mechanics from all sorts of teams go there, so you meet a lot of people. It's a cool track, good facility.

Q. You're a huge proponent of Myles Rowe, and this is the third year of the INDYCAR program Drive For Change and Equality. Where do you see Myles at the moment, where do you see Ernie Francis, and where do you see the program in general?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I'm hoping Myles has another really good year, and potentially if he could win the championship this year and then be in Indy Lights next year, potentially could be in INDYCAR in 2025-26. That would be best-case scenario.

That would be really good if he could do that.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: I saw him when he was -- I reckon he was 11 years old. Just happened to follow him. Spoke to his dad. He's like, yeah, he's only done some indoor karting. I'm like, man, he's got natural ability, and sort of just watched him from there on. And then there was a chance to have funding, Drive 4 Diversity, and it was just, yeah, perfect timing.

He literally texted me and said, hey, is there anything we can do? And I said, yeah, call me immediately, and spoke to him and spoke to Roger and spoke to some other people who were doing stuff; got him a test pretty quickly and just went from there.

Q. Motorsport is still on the short list of sports that might be added to the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, and it would likely take the form of electric karting. What kind of impact do you think that might have on young racers and young racers from different countries in terms of exposure and looking for budget?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think that would be fantastic for the sport. It would be fantastic if we had motorsport at the Olympics, especially the grass-roots karting scene, which is very big already. But it's not very well-known in general in the public that you can actually get paid to race go-karts.

But that's where it all starts. I hope that that happens. I think that would be amazing for our sport. It would be just -- it would be a good addition to the Olympics.

Q. Obviously now you've got the pole record. How big of a deal is it now to get that pole at IMS on the oval?

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's --

Q. That's kind of your one --

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's one that's eluded me for a long time, and I've had times that I've had the car to do it and then just sort of overshot or undershot in some way of trimming or it just hasn't worked out or the wind or the -- so yeah.

It's a tough one because it's often out of your hands. It really depends on the car you have that year, the time you go, the temperature -- it's all got to work. It's all got to work.

Yeah, either it'll happen or it won't. Either it'll all fall in place and it'll be there, or -- yeah.

Q. You've gotten poles at St. Pete. What is it about that track and the start of the season that amps you up or gets you going so quickly? Is it important to start off with a pole the first race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think it's the whole off-season of preparation, and you turn up and it's a track that suits me. It's pretty tight, technical, got to brush walls to get it. Yeah, everything I like about qualifying is that track, and there's not much time to think so you're always in a corner.

Yeah, always look forward to going to St. Pete.

Q. You're not known as an un-confident guy. What type of confidence does getting another championship and setting the all-time record in poles, how would you feel if you were able to get another four or five poles just this next year alone and another championship?

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's the goal. The confidence, I just think the older you get, the more comfortable you are with the situation. You just naturally gain confidence. You know your strengths. You know your weaknesses. You

know how to extract the most out of yourself. That's kind of what I've been doing.

I would say I don't have much pressure at this time in my career, so it's all about the craft and getting the most out of it.

Yeah, it's a good space to be in.

Q. Outside of all that happened at Laguna Seca, what other moments throughout the season last season were the ones that stick out in your mind the most?

WILL POWER: I think it's days where we qualified outside of the top 15 and were able to get all the way into the top 4. I think those days really made our year, and just being mistake free.

Q. Will, in the last four or five days, Simon has had some very pointed remarks towards Josef. Yesterday he specifically said, if he were still a Penske driver, he could not be saying the things he was saying. How do you guys at Penske handle as teammates like if you guys are mad at each other? How does it work?

WILL POWER: Oh, it's talked about pretty quickly and sorted out quickly. Never have beef with anyone for long. Always talk it out.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Well, I don't know the situation. I don't know if he was joking or it's for real. But yeah, I honestly haven't been looking at that. I've been busy at home.

Yeah, within the team I never have beef with anyone for long. It's just -- I try never to have a beef anyway. I try to stick to what I do and be respectful to people and be as respectful as you can on track.

Obviously everyone is racing for championships and race wins, so sometimes you're both looking for the same spot. That's the sport. It's racing.

Q. Will, do you feel now that you've kind of got that second championship that you're somewhat kind of off the leash to just go and be more aggressive now?

WILL POWER: No, it's just about extracting the most out of every situation. There's never like I need to be more aggressive. The situation is always different. They're always different and require a different approach. You've just got to get good at reading that.

It hasn't really -- honestly, I haven't even thought about the

championship. I haven't even -- I almost had to be reminded that I won the championship. Kind of just, I did it, and I know it's just that I'm older now and moving on quickly and thinking about what's next.

Yeah, haven't been on a high off-season or anything like that, I just kind of stayed even.

Q. To the point about not having a beef with people, Rick said one of the biggest changes he saw in you last year was if you had an issue, you still got as mad as you ever did but you got over it like that.

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's true.

Q. Was that kind of key to your amazing consistency through the season, just not letting emotion override --

WILL POWER: Yeah, like I said, every season flows differently, but just in general in my life, I just don't put too much emotion into situations. There's nothing to be gained from it.

There's just a lot of things that clicked last year within my team, the crew. Obviously Dave Faustino and the new crew chief are all pretty good group, pretty good, positive group, enjoying the job.

THE MODERATOR: Will, appreciate your time.

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