

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Romain Grosjean

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Will Power, third-place finish, 95th career podium. Tell us about your day. Trying to close the gap on Romain towards the end.

WILL POWER: Yeah, in the first stint when I saw everyone saving fuel about eight to 10 laps in, I said to the guys, Maybe we should switch to a three-stopper here. Do you want me to push? It was the best thing to do at that time.

Yeah, it worked out well. We had a very fast car. Any time we had clear air, we were pumping out some seriously quick times. During that last sequence is where we gained a ton of track position. I was able to do 67s in the last few laps.

Yeah, using the tires up. As soon as I started getting Romain's dirty air, he was doing a really good job of sort of saving fuel and also getting big exits, not making mistakes. I did everything I could to get to him and I just couldn't get there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Romain, on pit lane you alluded the push to pass surprised you a little bit, went from 99 seconds to zero. Have you gotten any explanation what may have happened?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Maybe I just had a brain freeze and it actually went down (smiling). That's what I thought. I thought it was 99, the next thing it was zero.

We're just going to have a look. Maybe it's a glitch in the dashboard or software, I don't know. I don't feel like I used 200 seconds. I just want to make sure we understand what happened.

Anyway, I don't think it would have changed a lot, as the two guys, Scott and Will, were much better on fuel in the last stint. It would have been tough to keep them behind.

Q. The first lap you had a fierce fight with Pato and with Alex. Were you surprised it was that fierce that early?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yes, I thought, What are they doing? I did manage to keep the lead, then they suffer more than I did. I guess it was the right call to stay in the front and dictate my pace.

Q. Will, did we see you go back to maybe last year's championship strategy where better to get third than to push it?

WILL POWER: I mean, I did everything to get to him and try to get him. Yeah, obviously there's that fine line, right? You can overdo it, which I did have a big moment in turn two where I was opposite like that.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I saw it in the mirror.

WILL POWER: So, yeah, I mean, just had to weigh that up. I simply couldn't close that gap. Yeah, he was doing a good job. My tires were sort of used up. Dirty air. Tried with push to pass. Nothing I could do. That's the most I could get out of the day. Extremely happy with it. Extremely, extremely happy to finish third.

Q. Two Team Penskes in the top three, without one of them being Josef, shows how fast this McLaughlin kid is.

WILL POWER: Yeah, two races where I followed him on the same bloody strategy. He ended up ahead.

That all ebbs and flows in the season when you're doing a good job. If you're doing your job, you'll get what you deserve, whether that's good or bad. Depends how good you do your job.

Q. Will, your season hasn't been bad, but it hasn't been good. A quarter of the way through the season now, heading to Indianapolis, how important was it to get the kind of finish you got today?

WILL POWER: Yeah, look, if I finished fifth I would have been happy, or sixth, even eighth honestly. There are



days that it's a bad day that get you.

I would say in the start of my season, it's just been pretty good. I wouldn't say it's a bad start of the season at all. I've been happy with all the results except for one, which was Texas. You can't win 'em all. In fact, it's very difficult to win one or two in a season. You just have to keep racking up good finishes.

Q. Romain, we couldn't tell from watching the broadcast if in either of those two trades of the lead if you ever touched wheels. Did you make any contact there at all?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: We kissed each other a touch (smiling).

Q. When you're fighting for the lead multiple times, with what happened at St. Pete, do you approach that any differently? Do you give him any more space, attack in a different place?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No, I know with Scott, a few guys out there that I'm really not worried about racing. Scott made a mistake in St. Pete. I know he doesn't race that way. It was all clean.

It's quite funny. He reminded me on the podium that last year I got him at the same spot. Next year I probably won't get him there if he's in front.

Q. You said post race a fifth second-place finish for you hurts. How are you dealing with a series of close calls knowing how much you want to get this first win in your INDYCAR career?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: You know what, you need to do everything perfect to win. Today we didn't have the right strategy. It is what it is. Control what you can control. That's what we did.

We executed very well this weekend. We had a fast car. Got pole. 20 seconds ahead of the two stoppers on the race finish. That shows how fast we were. We just didn't have the right strategy today, so...

I'd say we were not too bad. Put me P4 in the championship. Big picture, yes I wanted to win today, it hurts to not do it. We have a lot more occasions. If I can win Indy and the 500, it would be good.

WILL POWER: Got to be strong. I did both one time (smiling). If you can do it, probably good. You'd come out leading the championship.

Q. Romain, could you talk us through your overtake on Scott from a perspective of how you set that up, managed to pull that move off.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: The beauty of INDYCAR is the track evolves a lot during the race. You never really know what the grip is.

Scott saw I wanted to go on the inside in 15, 16. He closed the door. I thought my only option is to go on the outside, roll some speed, see if the grip is there. The grip was there. I managed to get side by side in the apex.

Same thing with turn five. The grip came on the very outside of the end of the race for some reason. It's the beauty of it. You have to adapt a lot during the race, your driving style.

Those races are tough. They're very tough, demanding. That's the way it goes. I was hoping for grip and I got the grip.

Q. You were 19 seconds ahead of the next person on the same strategy. Even though you lost out on the win, it's almost like a win in some sense, how far ahead you were of everybody else.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I think when your team boss comes to see you and says that's probably the best drive he's seen in INDYCAR, he's been around for a long time, Michael, you take that as a win.

Very proud of my engineer, my mechanics. We made P1, so we beat them on the back foot and got them with pole. We had a fast car today. With the fuel number we had to hit doing the lap times we were doing, pretty amazing. I'm really happy with that.

I saw Will coming, but I knew it would be at the end of his red tire life. When he was in dirty air, it would be hard for him. Try not to make any mistakes and keep enough fuel for the last two laps.

Q. Will, how much of a benefit is finishing on the podium going into the month of May? Does it bode well for the month of May?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it's good for the whole group on the car. Obviously mentally for yourself, it's a very positive thing. Everything's heading in the right direction.

Indy is a very, very different animal in terms of the 500. Obviously you have the Grand Prix before that. But, yeah, the 500 is a very standalone, tough, unique event. Yeah, we're hoping to be in the game this year. We've been

pretty disappointed with the performance the last few years.

We'll wait and see. You don't say anything. We've done a lot of work.

Q. Romain, explain to a race fan how difficult it is to try to hit that number and how technical it was to put in such a great drive, how satisfying is it to pull it off, get the number you wanted?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's probably the most frustrating type of racing. You know you can go faster, you want to keep the throttle pinned in, but you can't.

I think today probably didn't play in our favor the wind direction. There are two big places where you are going to do lift and coast. Basically you lift the throttle before the end of the straight line, you leave the car rolling until you get to the brake point.

It was 12 and five. Both of them were the headwinds. I think it was slowing down the car more than it should have. That probably played a bit of a role in the lap time. Probably something to keep in mind for the future.

Out of 90 laps, I think I did three laps where I was flat out, that's it. The rest I had to lift and coast and save fuel. It's a strategy we decided as a team before the race. We thought we could win with it, but obviously no.

Q. Will, you were the other side of that coin. What does that feel like?

WILL POWER: I mean, last year I did the two-stop, was doing what he had to do, went from 19th to 4th. This year we did the opposite thinking that the fuel mileage will be harder. If there's not a yellow, the number is going to be too big and the lap time deficit is too much.

Yeah, it kind of turned out like that. I think the yellow helped the three-stoppers a bit. Would have saved those guys a little bit of fuel. It was perfect timing for our pit stop.

But, yeah, it's a lot more fun when you get to just go all out, qualifying laps every lap. I really enjoy that sort of racing.

I have to say what he did is extremely difficult and technical. To finish 20 seconds ahead of the next guy is pretty impressive.

Q. Romain, you ran out of fuel on the cool-down lap.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I guess I'm glad I'm not the engineer on the pit wall making the call about the fuel

number. They just give me a number, and I try to hit it, right? That's all I do. For them, it's a lot of pressure. I think in Long Beach we were a bit too conservative. We could have burnt some more.

On the in lap, I think Josef Newgarden stopped by me. I think Colton was without fuel on track because everyone pushed it hard. Yeah, almost made it to the pit, missed by 150 meters.

Q. Will, you had great pace towards the end of the race. You've done well here at Barber. Is there something about this track that fits your driving style?

WILL POWER: They're all different. These days you've got to be an expert at every track. It requires a lot of homework, which every single driver does now, as you can see from qualifying.

I've just got a good group around me making the right decisions in the race. It is a real process to put a whole race weekend together without mistakes. That's what I've worked very hard on over the last couple years.

I struggled this weekend. I basically qualified 11th. I think our potential was just on the verge of the top six. We were pretty close to where we needed to be. Then executed in the race.

Yeah, I love the track. I think it's a phenomenal event. The appearance, presentation they do, is really good. It's setting the example for all promoters. Yeah, I hope we continue to come here for years.

Q. Romain, so close. Next time?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I guess so. It's done today, so on to the next one, Indy GP. I was fast in '21. Last year was a bit more difficult.

The two races we finished this year twice second. We're knocking on the door, and eventually the door will open. So I am not too worried. As Will said, it's super competitive, it's tough. We have to push every single lap hard. Yeah, today they did a better job on the strategy.

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