

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, April 30, 2023

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Scott McLaughlin, winner of today's race. First win of the season, fourth of his career. Now the fourth different winner of the 2023 NTT INDYCAR SERIES season. Scott, with the win, jumps up to fourth place in points now, 11 points back in the championship.

A lot of storylines for you in this race. To get a win here, it's got to feel good.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Feels awesome. I think we have had the pace. Obviously St. Pete we were strong, contending for wins, maybe not Texas, but Long Beach we were right there.

I'm really proud to sort of execute today. Probably the most complete race I've ever driven in an INDYCAR, to be honest, from a strategy perspective, picking people off. It was getting pretty tough in the middle when we were making passes, lap traffic, whatnot.

Ultimately when Grosjean got me out of the pits, didn't catch me by surprise. Well, he caught me napping. It was a great move by him. To reset, go again, then pass him back with the pace that we had, that's a proud drive for me personally, but from a team perspective, really proud.

Good Ranchers first time on the car. They're going to be big supporters in INDYCAR. Their enthusiasm they have got for the series I think is just great. They have people like that willing to spend money in our series, that are so passionate.

They didn't have customers here this weekend, they had staff and the CEO. It's a good vibe. Really proud for them.

Yeah, perfect way to kick off what is going to be a massive month.

THE MODERATOR: The battle between you and Romain, immediately everyone was thinking St. Pete.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I knew it.

THE MODERATOR: What was going through your mind as you're trying to hold him off?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I thought if I hit him this time, it would be bad (smiling).

Racing him like we normally do, very clean. I knew it was going to be hard passing him. It was a matter of me biding my time. I asked the guys, Where are we at on fuel? Had a bit more than him. Allowed me to pressure him a bit more, use a bit more to overtake, whatever. I had a lot more overtake up my sleeve.

Ultimately that's what helped me pass him. I think the way I got the run up into turn eight was purely by push to pass. I was able to save that. Once we got out in front, it was just a matter of managing it till the end.

THE MODERATOR: When that battle is happening, you know you're going to have the fresher tires at the end of the day, would have an opportunity to make a move, try to repass him.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, but it was hard. I thought I'd be on the safe side when I had the reds on. Thought I might have been able to get him back. But he had great pace. I knew I couldn't sit behind him too long. I had to pressure him. Yeah, that's what we did, managed to get the pass.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Racing at Alabama, Barber, your take on what it's like racing out there?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Personally I think this is our best road course that we go to. Especially now it's my favorite (smiling).

Honestly, it's a great place. The state of Alabama do a fantastic job with how they look after things. Obviously (indiscernible) before that. A beautiful place. I remember coming here the first time going, Whoa, this is amazing.

But to drive an INDYCAR around here at high speeds, high

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commitment, is some of the best driving you'll ever do. I'm telling all my friends back in Australia like Shane van Gisbergen. People are asking, like, the track looks awesome. Yeah, this is next-level commitment.

They've got a gym here. I'm very excited they extended the contract multi-year for more races here, especially now I know I've got a good car. Very cool, cool place.

Q. The Indy 500, you douse yourself in milk. The Nestle Drum Sticks, can you talk about that?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: John has been there for 40 years. He always has ice creams after, especially after we win. I had an ice cream after qualifying yesterday and I sucked. Maybe I just needed more ice cream.

Q. Obviously with the new sponsor, the stakes are high. When Grosjean gets past you, what's your level of frustration? Are you thinking with everything that happened in St. Pete, you know there's going to be major contact, it's not going to go as nicely this time around?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Never thought that. I ultimately was just like, Okay, got past me, caught me napping. That was a great move by him. I had car pace and fuel on hand.

I think ultimately I would have got past him anyway with how much he had to save fuel. I wasn't stressed. I was annoyed I cost myself maybe cruising in some ways, saving fuel, driving to my number.

Ultimately it made the race win a lot more satisfying passing for the lead after being passed at the end of the exchange.

Q. Power was on reds till the end. Did his pace concern you at all?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, no, no. I was full, like, in control. Honestly, I felt like the car was so good, I was just hitting my number, did what I needed to do. I knew if Power got to me, I had pace and fuel on hand to push till the end.

Q. There was concern on the radio about fuel. Did they tell you why?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. Ultimately I think we were looking after our engine. Whenever you get that call halfway through the last lap, you poop your pants a little bit. Yeah, I was pretty nervous.

Q. When you're running on a different strategy to the two-stoppers were, the race starts to play itself out, how much in your mind are you thinking you hope you made the right move or we should have gone the other way?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I just trust my team. The only concern I had was why we stopped a couple laps after Josef and we lost track position on him. We eventually sort of caught up and passed him.

I wasn't too stressed about that. It was just a matter of just maximizing what I had, what my cards were. That was getting through traffic and using that car pace.

We talked about that in the strategy meeting this morning. Sort of knew what I had to do. At the end of the day I see a 10th of what everyone else sees on the stand. I know I've got the best guys in pit lane calling my strategy. I just trust them.

It's a boring answer, but legitimately for me I was ticking laps off in my head, driving the best I could, doing what I needed to do.

Q. I heard from your dad. He said, That was a pretty cool race, wasn't it? He's quite happy right now.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm sure he is. It's like 6 a.m. in the morning.

Q. The Bus Bros care package is sorted and the Chocolate Fish are in there.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. No worries.

Q. How close did you come to touching Romain? Did you touch in either of those?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think we touched when he passed me a little bit. But it was fair game. It was awesome racing, man. It was exactly what INDYCAR was. Yeah, ain't no procession here, that's for sure. It was a lot of fun.

Q. When you have had an incident like you had in St. Pete racing wheel to wheel through a corner, do you have to approach when you're passing someone any different or do you learn something from that type of incident to better prepare you to pass that specific driver coming into another situation that was similar today?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, no, no. Just play your cards as you get dealt. Take risks where you need to. You got

to learn from your mistakes obviously. We both had our opinions on the incident from St. Pete. We're over it now. For me, I think for him as well, it was just press on.

Yeah, I think we showed today it's no big thing affair. It's just hard racing. We'll race each other to every bit of the track, use each other up when we need to. That's just part of it and that's why I enjoy racing Romain.

Q. What did you see from your vantage point when you made your move in turn five? Was it a little bit of a wiggle coming through? Did you find yourself at that point waiting for him to make a mistake or move?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was pressuring him. I knew he was starting to save fuel and stuff. I was biding my time. I was really surprised. I didn't think I was going to pass him at that point. Sort of just took my chance.

I had a lot more push to pass than he did. I just used push to pass all the way up to seven, managed to clear him. He was never going to sort of pass me into eight. If he did pass me into eight, he was probably going to crash me. Just sort of hoped to God that he didn't do that, and he didn't. We got out of there and pressed on.

Q. He came into the sport at the same time, rookie seasons ups and downs at the same time. Even though you had the incident in St. Pete, seems like you have a lot of respect, aren't afraid to bang wheels, have a lot of trust in each other. How do you view or how would you describe Romain as a competitor on track?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: He's got a never-give-up attitude. I think that's why he's been in F1 for so long, come over here and been quite successful.

At the end of the day you know you're going to have a hard battle with him. I feel it's give or take. If you give him nothing, he will give you nothing. It's the whole tit for tat. I really enjoy racing him. No hard feelings.

We spoke about what happened, yeah, and just get on with it. I've had great battles with him. I actually really enjoyed the battle today. It's a lot of fun. Obviously I came out on top, but it's still a lot of fun.

Q. We've had a wide variety of races. St. Pete was a brawl. The big oval at Texas, another interesting race. Talk about how you approach it when you don't have any idea what you're going to get when you come to a racetrack.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think it's just the product of INDYCAR. But play your cards how you're dealt. Today

could have been a two-stop, or a three-stop like we did. We thought it was a three-stop was the right way.

We have the opportunity as a series to change that up. That's why it makes it so exciting. I think the addition of push to pass, stuff going on as well, is a good thing. It's such a good racing product. I don't know how to explain it. I think we're very lucky with the level of drivers, how hard we can race the cars. The cars are very strong.

The difference in compounds. The tires are really good. Firestone built a really good tire that's able to race in hard conditions all the time.

Yeah, I don't know. I just think it's INDYCAR. It's not a about winning every race in this racing series, it's all about just being consistent in the championship. That's exactly what our goal has sort of been since the start.

Q. Your strategy meeting, you write everything in pencil, here is what we think we might be able to do?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It all depends on yellows. If there was an early yellow, our thing probably wouldn't have worked that well. Two-stoppers would have looked really good.

Yeah, you just got to play your cards how you think you're going to be right, hopefully it comes off. You can't beat car pace. That's the best part, you can't beat car pace.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Thanks.

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