

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, July 22, 2023

**Scott McLaughlin**

**Pato O'Ward**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up today's Hy-Vee Homefront 250 presented by Instacart, podium finishers will be here of course. Josef Newgarden with the win here today. Joined now by Scott McLaughlin in the No. 3 Expel Team Penske Chevrolet, coming home 2nd, second podium of the season, tenth of his career. And also joining us, Pato O'Ward in the No. 5 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet with his fifth podium of 2023 and 18th of his career.

Scott, tell us about race number one here this week and your thoughts.

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: I'm going to get him at some point. I'm very determined. Helluva race. I think the three of us could have easily swept the top three there. Pato did an awesome job. Their cars are just really good through traffic.

What I learned with Josef during the week, during the last couple of weeks, has been huge. It's a nice little rabbit to chase when he's out in front. When you can keep up with him, that's a nice feeling. Gives me a lot of confidence.

Learned a lot for tomorrow. I think we've got a really good race car we can sort of evolve with and just get better.

THE MODERATOR: Pato, your thoughts getting back on the podium here at Iowa Speedway?

PATO O'WARD: Solid podium for us today. Just didn't have anything for the Penskes. We need to take a solid step forward if we want to make them sweat tomorrow.

I just think they were specifically strong getting through traffic. I would just -- I'd get stuck. I wasn't able to place the car where I needed to in order to get by some slow cars.

Obviously happy with it, but considering how much pace we had last year, it's like where is it?

THE MODERATOR: You guys were catching up quickly to back markers, lap cars, and whatnot. Mentally, what's that like to go through a couple hours or so where you're really trying to -- weaving in and out of cars and dealing with traffic all day long? Pato?

PATO O'WARD: Usually it's quite okay. You know who you're racing. Sometimes you get to some guys, and they're just not very gentleman-like, I guess, when you're falling behind.

Yeah, I had some moments in there where it wasn't all turning left for sure.

THE MODERATOR: 1,502 passes on track, which is the most on record here at Iowa Speedway, INDYCAR sort of tracking that back in 2007. So there's a lot going on out on the 7/8-mile oval. Take a couple of questions.

**Q. Pato, do you have enough time in the warmup tomorrow, and can you do enough to make enough changes to catch up to the Penske guys? They're incredible.**

PATO O'WARD: I have a very clear picture of what we need. We've just got to get creative and see how we're going to find that. Obviously we put our best foot forward coming into qualifying for the race, knowing what we've had here in the past, and we think this is going to be working for us.

But we need to take another step if we want to challenge for the win tomorrow.

**Q. Scott, you were telling us yesterday that like Josef had opened up the playbook and showed you everything, but you thought there might be some things maybe he didn't show you. Do you feel like you've got a full Monty from Josef?**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I definitely think he's opened it right up, which is good because I think it's pushed us all three. Us three were really, really strong during that race, something to be proud of for the team.

Yeah, I was -- I'm a little bummed the second to last stint

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

we just didn't have the balance that I needed. If I had the balance that I had in the last stint and I was able to stay with him, I really feel like we could have been right there with him and made some moves.

When I was catching him towards the end, I was like, oh, it's going to be a little Texas rerun but other way around. Yeah, didn't quite get there. He's very good on this place. He's got a very good understanding of the car and where he puts it.

Yeah, I think he was getting choked up a little bit. There's a lot of guys out there that were racing the leader very hard, mirror driving, and just at times it was quite dangerous. Yeah, it is what it is.

**Q. That was one of the first things that Josef mentioned in his Victory Lane interview, so I'll give you guys the opportunity. Are we naming names in terms of who some of these drivers are?**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: Not in the media, but we'll go see them tonight.

**Q. Same question for you both. How was the tire situation, and can you use maybe the tire degradation and change the pressure?**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: My engineer gets paid to figure that out. So I'll just drive the thing. I think we definitely need a little bit here or there. I think all three cars in Penske have the strengths and weaknesses. So we'll sort of try and make up a sort of special sauce for tomorrow.

Yeah, I thought they brought a new tire this weekend from Firestone. Feels really good. No vibrations or anything. So that's really good to start.

**Q. Scott, first portion of the race when Will was leading and you tried a couple of times to go underneath him and a couple of times weren't able to pull it off, was that just basically the strength of his car, or did you run out of room on the track?**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: I think it's just I probably ran him a little hard. I thought Josef was further back, and then all of a sudden he was ten back, five back, and then passing me. Probably burned my stuff up a little too much, but I had to start going for it.

Definitely felt faster than Will, but it was hard. We were always -- one was getting choked up by traffic, and the next, you take one lane, and then that lane in front of you had gone. You can't just wash up in front of the guy or into the side of them.

It is what it is, but that was probably one part of the race where I felt annoyed with myself a little bit.

**Q. Pato, over the last couple of years, it seems like the same guys fighting for the wins and for the victories. How much does it, at least finishing on the podium, validate how good you are here?**

PATO O'WARD: Absolutely, it's one of the places where we come in here and we know that we've had a very good past here. It doesn't necessarily mean we're going to have the exact same results.

I think today was a little bit of what we had last year, but definitely not as strong. Last year we had, I felt like we were on par with where Josef was, and really what makes you lead or be second in line is usually if you can get them on the undercut or whatever.

Today I definitely felt like I was a bit more on the defensive. I didn't feel like I was attacking as much, and I couldn't put the car where I needed to. It was a really, really hard race, probably the hardest Iowa race that I've done, just to keep it where we had it.

**Q. For both of you, the opening green stint was a very long stint. Were you both surprised at how long that was? Was there ever a thought in your mind around halfway that the race could have gone caution free?**

PATO O'WARD: I thought it could have been caution-free for sure. 60-something laps, wasn't it? I don't know exactly how much it was, but it was getting pretty gnarly.

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: We said in our strategy meeting the actual probability of yellows is low. There's not really that many yellows here. We sort of figured it was going to be like that.

Yeah, I was surprised how long that first run to the yellow went, but at least it didn't throw a curveball fuel-wise. Everyone had to make a stop or two. I don't know how many stops we made it in, but yeah.

**Q. Was it very tough out there physically for the first opening stint for that long? Usually you're able to take a small breather under yellows but not that much.**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: It was okay. The head pad is a wonderful thing, laying your head on it, and you sort of just go with it.

It's more mental. It's just mentally very like -- you feel like you're not blinking for two hours. That's probably more

taxing. I'll get a good sleep tonight and come back tomorrow.

**Q. Scott, just for people that tune in to my podcast and stuff down here in New Zealand, this is the true essence of speedway racing in its purest form on a short track oval like this. Can you just explain what that's like for you as a driver by comparison to anything else the series comes across?**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: It's a little bullring. It's probably one of my favorite ovals. Apart from IMS, it's probably my favorite just from the perspective of being able to run different lanes and be able to really control your own destiny with your right foot.

It's not just flat out. It's not just ripping around. You've actually got to really think where you put the car, how hard you drive into the corner. You've got to think about looking after your tires at the start of the stint to the end because it's a really nice bank.

Gateway has a little bit of it, but this one really, really cool and I enjoy having two races here. It also helps when your car is phenomenal like it has been the last few years. Enjoyed it and glad I qualified up front both races.

**Q. It's mentally very tough too concentration-wise because something is happening all the time, there's no breathing space whatsoever for you.**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: I think it's probably 30 laps, 15 after the start and 15 after the restart, where we didn't pass anyone. Like after that, every lap I was passing a car. That's pretty crazy to think about in an 18-second lap, but it is what it is.

Sometimes then at the end of the stint, you've got people that aren't that quick, but they're on new tires, so they're just flying through you like a video game. You feel like a superhero at the start of your stints, that's for sure. It's an awesome place for this car, for this series, and I'm glad we've got two races, and it's such a great event.

**Q. Well done today. Happy you're 1-2, but let's reverse the fortune tomorrow.**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

**Q. What's the recovery plan for both you guys? A beer with Kenny Chesney?**

SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN: No, man. I'll probably have a really cold shower. I'd like a nice bath. I think you boys do that. Yeah, just cool down. It's not as hot as last year

thankfully. And get ready for a big one tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Pato, how are you going to recover?

PATO O'WARD: Eat.

THE MODERATOR: Good plan.

PATO O'WARD: Big meal.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the podium. We'll see you tomorrow. Scott McLaughlin will start 2nd tomorrow, Pato O'Ward will start 11th.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

