

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 5, 2023

Scott McLaughlin

Pato O'Ward

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying for tomorrow's race here on the straights of Nashville. Joined now by the pole winner for tomorrow's race, Scott McLaughlin. Back-to-back pole positions here in Nashville.

Also joining us, Pato O'Ward. It is an all-Chevrolet front row for tomorrow's race.

Scott, we'll begin with you. Tell us about your qualifying run. How satisfying?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Really satisfying because it all started in Q1 for us. Pumped a decent lap out there. 6/10ths better than P2. We were able to do one lap on our greens. Bolted those on for Q3. I just had to make sure we got to the Fast Six, which we did. Every lap in quallie, nailed it pretty good. A really satisfying qualifying session, probably the best of my INDYCAR career, to be honest.

THE MODERATOR: You take a look at the gap between you and Pato and the rest of the field. The last lap was huge.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That was the money one, really nice, juicy. I'm really happy with that.

Yeah, look, honestly, same car as what we ran last year. It's just been unreal. The Chevy has been awesome. Been a lot of gains everywhere. I think we've made improvements.

Overall just to come here with the same philosophy, just nail laps, it's a good feeling, especially with the interruptions between sessions. I actually wanted it to rain. I was excited with the rain. The rain was a lot of fun this morning, had a blast. Learn a ton every time I'm in the rain.

Nice to be fast in the wet and dry.

THE MODERATOR: Pato, good momentum heading into

tomorrow's race for you. Your thoughts?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, congrats, Scott. I don't think I had 3/10ths in there to get a little closer. Maybe one. Pretty stellar lap.

I was super happy with my car. I think we were really strong in Q2. I thought it would be a couple 10ths slower in Q3 because it's not new alternate.

I've never won from pole, so I'm not angry I'm starting second (smiling).

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I have (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Maybe bodes well for tomorrow. Who knows.

We'll begin with questions.

Q. Last year's race here, is that one you feel like kind of got away from you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. The final stint there, we were 15th. Managed to lose by a nose. There's a lot went on. Our car was phenomenal. I feel like it's just as good this year. Just a matter of... I don't know what will happen tomorrow. You can't even plan really. Guy won last year doing six stops.

You just got to play it on the run and try and do the best job, execute every lap that I can. Pit stops need to be good. Yeah, the reason we were back there last year was a bad pit stop. That was an unfortunate thing that doesn't really happen on my car.

Yeah, I'm super pumped for tomorrow to see what we got.

Q. Colton said when you're fast here, you're waiting for something to go wrong. Did you feel that way last year?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I mean, you're just waiting for the yellow light to flash up on your dash or something like that. You can't control anything like that. It's a matter of me controlling what I can control, execute.



I feel like I've done that all weekend. It's just a matter of executing for tomorrow's race.

Q. Pato, even though Scott dominated, maybe it's not a race where you want to be up front because...

PATO O'WARD: Everything can happen here, as we've seen in '21. The first car that was in the air won (laughter). Yeah, will it be as chaotic tomorrow? I don't know. That's what we thought in '22. It was worse, so... Maybe tomorrow it's the same. Worse, better, I don't know.

If it rains, it will make things interesting.

Q. How do you strategize?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I just think you don't. You have a plan, but you don't.

PATO O'WARD: That goes out the window after the first stint.

Q. Do you make a backup plan?

PATO O'WARD: You have like 10 plans.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Plans just happen.

PATO O'WARD: One falls, it's like we're going to plan F.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was on numbers last year, plan Z1.

Q. Do you feel like you waste time in strategy meetings?

PATO O'WARD: You don't really plan it out. We're going into the race like this, and then let's see where we get guided, pretty much.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: See what our destiny holds. Yeah, it was just a big word 'destiny'.

No, I think we'll just play it as it goes. I think me and Pato will get a strong start, get away from everyone, fight for the win.

Q. Scott, was there any additional emphasis placed on qualifying for this race, second place, second place, second place?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. Every qualifying we go into, we want a pole. That's how it is. It's INDYCAR. It's just so hard to nail it. That's why it feels good when you have the

margin.

Everybody is so bloody good now. It's just a matter of putting it together. I still think a front row start is still bloody good. Getting in the Fast Six is tough these days. You can miss it by half a 10th.

No emphasis every week. You just want it more when you miss out on it a lot.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: DEX Imaging, who sell printers and copiers. I just started calling it the Printer Wagon. I call the Good Ranch Chevy the Meat Wagon. Every car I'm just going to name. Pennzoil is the Oil Wagon. We'll move on from there.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, but I don't drive that. It's like a horse and cart.

Q. Scott, for Team Penske to get a road course pole, how important is that?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's a street course.

Q. Street course, road course.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm joking. I'm giving you shit (smiling).

No, look, I'm really stoked. We were dry all year. Qualifying is a really strong suit now.

PATO O'WARD: Are you wet now?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: What?

PATO O'WARD: You said you were dry all year. Are you wet (smiling)?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: You should see. I'm sweating through my suit.

We went through a bit of a dry spell there. It was nice, three in a row now. Yeah, that's a good thing. I'm really happy for (indiscernible) that drives the uppy one. He puts stickers on the truck. He gets three stickers now, which is fantastic.

Q. Practice was in the wet. Only 30 minutes. There's no warm-up. Is that just going to make this race even more of a crapshoot? Is this a better way of going into



it?

PATO O'WARD: We've been dry the past few years. It's crash-ville so...

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think just press on. We'll be all right.

PATO O'WARD: Maybe we're full green.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't want anyone doing any more laps.

Q. Scott, SVG said apparently in the last few days he's going to be leaving Supercars in Australia and coming to NASCAR part-time next year. How nice is to it have him coming over?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think he's been talking to me a little bit about what it's like to live here, stuff like that. I don't know if it's official yet. I think his intention is that, if it all happens.

But, yeah, look, it's awesome. I think I've said a number of times what I think he did at Chicago was awesome, awesome for New Zealand motorsport. For him to be here, I'm very excited for him. Four years ago, we were banging doors in Supercars. It's crazy. Now we've both had a win in America, which is awesome.

Yeah, it's going to be cool to race on the same weekend. Brodie Kosteki from Australia is here as well. Going to be cool. Looking forward to it.

I'm going to go home and watch it from my couch on Sunday.

Q. You can go to the Truck race Friday night.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I probably will go to that. Yeah, I will go to that. That's actually a good point. I just forgot about that.

Q. You don't have a warm-up session. How do you evaluate the green tires?

PATO O'WARD: You don't. You just pick a tire, don't abuse it too much, I guess, yeah.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I agree.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I believe so, yes. I think both compounds were the same.

Q. The grip between practice Friday and now after qualifying?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was surprised how much grip we had from qualifying to start with. Practice one, it was okay. I actually feel like the grip overall for the track, there's a few changes on the track, but it actually feels really quick.

Yeah, I think in addition to that is tires we run on are a little softer this year. Absolutely, I think the evolution has probably been a bit slower due to the rain, but faster I guess in my thoughts than it would. Sometimes when it rains, you wash off a lot more rubber than it usually does, so I was very surprised.

Q. I'm interested to know, during the practice session this morning, was it mandated that you ran the new rain deflector bodywork?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm not sure if it was on or not. Just sort of hopped in and got going. I didn't really look at that.

I mean, I was very impressed with the tire, to be honest. Like, I felt like I had a lot of grip. For those conditions, I think it was absolute perfect conditions for our tire before we stopped, there was a lot of water on the track.

The deflector, I'm not sure. The visibility is what I would expect if we had that much rain on the track. But, yeah, I can't comment on that hundred percent.

Q. There is the possibility it could rain again tomorrow. Is there a lot of road markings on the course in terms of paint that come into play or are you clear of that most of the time?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's not too bad. There's a couple pedestrian crossings, some lines going down to turn four. The grip was there when we went across those.

Yeah, like I said, I was pleasantly surprised with the overall grip of the track. They weren't really too much of an issue.

THE MODERATOR: They were not mandatory for the qualifying session, just to follow up.

Congratulations. Have a great night. We'll see you tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

