

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, August 6, 2023

**Scott McLaughlin**

**Alex Palou**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up this year's race here on the Nashville street circuit. Joined by the two podium finishers.

Finishing second today for the second straight year Scott McLaughlin. Second podium in three races in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. Third podium of the season. 11th of his career.

Also joining us Alex Palou, the points leader. Second straight podium finish in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. Eighth of the season. 23rd of his career. Also picking up another four championship points. 84-point lead over Josef Newgarden with four races remaining.

Scott, another podium for you, although I have a feeling you wanted to finish one step higher.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, yeah, I'm disappointed. But it is what it is. I think we had a really fast car today. Just that first yellow destroyed a few things, which is probably going to play. You hope it doesn't come, but it came. You take it or lose your advantage, try to reset and go again. That's what we decided, the latter.

Yeah, we did pretty well. We were able to come back a little bit. But overall Kyle just had that little shorter stop that he could do, away they went.

I was trying to do my best to hunt him down at the end. I just had a poor restart. I had no temp in my rear tires for some reason. So annoying. I don't know what happened. Like I didn't change my procedure. I'm normally pretty good on restarts, but I was terrible.

Yeah, got to do a little bit of study on that. I think if I was a little bit closer, I might have been able to maybe throw a little dive bomb at him. Unfortunately couldn't.

THE MODERATOR: The restarts, I'm sure you're second or triple guessing what you could have done differently.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, that last one has me a little confused. I felt like I was harder on the tire, whatever. I just think from a sport perspective, though, the restarts are a joke. We need to, like, I think we need to start on the start/finish line. We cannot pass until the start/finish line. You're always going to have these yellows. You're always going to have these clusters that cause red flags and make us look like...

Yeah, there's no cadence. Once there's a yellow flag on a street circuit, it's just a free-for-all. People bomb. We're well within our rights to do that. If we want to have a pure race, we could have had a 10-lap shootout, me and Kyle there at the end. Instead we're stop, start, stop, start. The action is fantastic. We just have no race.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, congratulations. Extending your points lead a little bit. The second caution for the race, you were thinking fuel save mode, then that changed?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we made a really aggressive call on that first yellow, like lap 13 or 14. We pitted. It was the plan honestly. We spoke about it. I was pushing for it. It wasn't the right call today.

We expected a lot more cautions throughout the race. So, yeah, we learned I think we were super, super lucky today. Luck was on our favor because we were not going to make it. Then those yellows came.

But, yeah, it was a very stressful race. I think I lost like five years of my life just trying to save fuel, a lot of fuel, and praying for a yellow. It finally came, which was good for me, not for you. It was perfect for me.

Yeah, it was overall a really good day. Could have been a lot cleaner and a lot easier. We wanted to make it a bit too hard.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

**Q. It's natural you expect a lot of yellows. Were you surprised more didn't come?**



ALEX PALOU: Yes and no. If you look at Detroit, Belle Isle, the past three years, it was two years in a row it was completely, like, crash-ville as well. Suddenly the last one, no cautions till the last lap.

It goes that way when we know it's tight, we know there's going to be a lot of yellows. We should have thought about that maybe more. It was just purely our fault.

**Q. Catching the yellow at the end, did this feel a lot like Toronto, it broke your way?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I would say even more today. Today we were, like, done. We couldn't really save that much fuel. It was impossible. We were already saving and losing like 2 seconds a lap, 2.5. They told me to go.

We did one full lap of going because we wanted to get some lap time, try and pass some cars that were, like, 20th or whatever. Suddenly the yellow came. I was like, Yeah. Then another yellow that helped me a lot so I could at least be a bit more aggressive or defensive on the last restart.

**Q. Have you ever had a year like this where it seems like every race...**

ALEX PALOU: No.

**Q. ... something breaks your way every race?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah. I try and get advantage of that. I'll try and get advantage of that because I know it's not often. Last year we didn't win a race until the last race. I thought that every race we had something wrong going on, on our strategy or race. This year is the opposite. I'll take it.

**Q. Scott, they changed the restart zone this year and last year. You just want it to be where the start/finish line is?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I just think everywhere we go, we don't have to have it for ovals, but I think it happens at Long Beach. We talked about doing it, like, about not passing till the apex of the last corner. At least that.

I think when it goes green, there's kamikazes at the back and don't care. Well within their right to throw it inside when it turns green. That's fine. But we just have this terrible just stop, start, amateur-ish looking finish to races.

I'm going to speak to Jay about it, Novak. We just need to go apex last corner or start/finish line. Just make a point where you can't pass just to get it going.

Look, I might be wrong. I might crash in turn one. What

I'm saying, I've done it in Supercars. Formula 1 does it. Other sports around the world do it. It just gets the race going.

Everyone is on cold tires. Someone is going to have a mistake. The guy behind him is going to go, I have a crack. People getting hurt. Rah-rah. I just think it looks amateur-ish, it really does.

**Q. At Long Beach, there's that hairpin that works. Gentlemen's agreement?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's not a gentlemen agreement. I think VeeKay a couple years ago threw it on the inside, ruined Rahal's race.

Road America this year, I passed Rahal before the last corner. I felt like a kamikaze. You have to run the rules how they're run.

It's just such a simple thing. We move restarts, we do that, we do that. Nothing works until we, like, police it. We have to police something. It pisses me off, it really does.

**Q. You said yesterday you felt like last year got away from you. Do you feel the same way this year?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, that's how it is. I think if I could have got past Grosjean a little bit earlier, put more pressure on Kyle. I could have passed him maybe before when he was on greens before he pitted.

That's just how it is. I'm pretty stoked with the result. Bummed that maybe I couldn't have had too much of a shootout at the end. Like I said, my restart was bad.

Yeah, I probably said too much, going to get in trouble over it.

**Q. How many pounds do you need to lose?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: How many do I have to lose? Well, it's 15 pounds, I think the system.

**Q. Doesn't seem like you can.**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I've already lost 20. I'm still fat. Yeah, I want to have a beer tonight and McDonald's, so...

ALEX PALOU: That's not the way to lose (smiling).

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, no.

ALEX PALOU: But I'll join you.



SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: My whole life, I've always been the heavy kid. It's just annoying. You can go and have, like, a pie tonight and be fine.

ALEX PALOU: What?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: What do you weigh?

ALEX PALOU: 160.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Right (smiling). That's where I'm at. I'm like right on the number.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't know the rule exactly. I decide not to wear one because as well I've had one fail in Supercars. It was so hot. It was almost hotter than it was.

The hardest thing today is yellows and red flags. As soon as you stop, it gets 30 degrees hotter right away, knocks you around a little bit.

Yeah, we were good. We were good. No dramas.

**Q. Earlier in the weekend some drivers were saying it's almost impossible because of how crazy it was. Where was this on your ranking of this is going to happen, this is going to happen?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I knew when the yellow came out, that's kind of the time, the first yellow, where we didn't want it. I don't know what plan that was. We knew it would put us in an awkward spot. If it happened lap 21 or something like that, no-brainer. We lose spots, go back to 10th. People are taking it before the yellow, kind of like last year.

But, yeah, it's hard to plan for this stuff.

**Q. To have that long of a run, green flag...**

ALEX PALOU: It was 23 laps max last year.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. Maybe we're learning. Maybe as a sport we're getting better driving.

**Q. Alex, fuel save there middle of the race. Was there some stuff you tried that you never tried before?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I pull the clutch, like iRacing style. They told me not to do it again.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm not allowed to do that.

ALEX PALOU: Me neither. But I tried (smiling).

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I've asked that a number of times. I wonder why.

ALEX PALOU: I think it just more works too much, yeah.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We're having a little debrief here guys. Don't worry about it (smiling).

**Q. Were you surprised by the pace of the race at the beginning or were you just kind of thinking like the guys of NASCAR thinking, that impending doom that something's going to happen?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was just sort of driving within myself. I knew it would get to lap 20 or so. Better in clear air on the green tire to control it, look after the fronts, whatever.

But, yeah, I was in a really good spot. I was controlling Pato, saving the fuel I needed. Then I started sort of pushing after the first yellow. We actually gapped them again.

The blacks, brought everyone back to us, the gap we gained. Herta was driving around. It is what it is.

**Q. Did you think the race would continue without yellows?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No.

**Q. You're saying, When is it going to happen?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: There is going to be a yellow at some point, yeah.

ALEX PALOU: Yes, about the green?

**Q. The long stretch of green flag. It was a clean race for the most part.**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, obviously we didn't expect that, otherwise we would have not pitted on lap 13 yellow. We expected a lot more yellows.

Basically after a yellow, like what we saw at the end, we were going to pit, then there was going to be another yellow so everybody would pit and we would transfer to P1, but it didn't work.

**Q. Was it a matter not if there's going to be a yellow but when?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, that's what I was praying for. Man, it

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

didn't come. When you are on the side of the wanting a yellow, it never comes. When you don't want a yellow, it comes right away.

In my vision, it was not coming. Everybody was on fuel saving. I don't know why. Everybody was taking it easy. Then at the end I guess people started pushing. That's when the yellow came.

But, yeah, I was surprised.

**Q. Alex, at the end there, you were super saving, then you abandoned that. Two seconds a lap faster.**

ALEX PALOU: Yes.

**Q. What was that roller coaster like?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, that's what we did because we were just losing so much lap time that we were going to come out last. So we just said, All right, we still have 10 laps, maybe we can still finish P15, which is better than P20 or whatever.

Yeah, we went hard one and a half laps. I was super quick. We knew we had a fast car. But then I was worried because obviously we had to use a lot of fuel on that lap. Maybe that was putting us in a bad position for the end. Luckily we were on the right side.

So it was very stressful, a stressful day. But, yeah, learned a lot for sure.

**Q. From the points championship standpoint, clearly you're happy, kept Josef behind you. Was that the big thing in your mind?**

ALEX PALOU: No, I was just wanting to finish the race. Without our issue on strategies, I was wanting to go for the win honestly. I thought we had the car and the pace to fight for the win today.

Yeah, we lost an opportunity, but also super happy to be on the podium, especially with the lap that we needed today, that we got it.

Yeah, it was a 10 out of 10 day at the end results-wise.

**Q. (Question about points championship.)**

ALEX PALOU: Until they give us the trophy... I think Josef can win the last four races. Why not? Everybody can do it. We can do it, as well.

Yeah, on this championship, on this series, unfortunately I

don't think you can just take it easy, especially now with all the work we did. We don't want to race to finish ninth. Maybe on the last race I would take that, absolutely.

But, yeah, with Indy road course coming up, we won there on May, I think we know we have a fast car. We have an opportunity to win there again. Then Scott told me that he's going to win at Gateway. That's it.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm going to win every race from here in.

ALEX PALOU: Indy road course at least.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'd like to go well there because I suck there at the moment.

**Q. (Question about Argentina.)**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Getting in trouble. But it says in my Twitter bio I tweet things I shouldn't. I don't understand how big it is in Argentina, how much they really love racing. Paid attention to my Supercars at least, as well.

I actually thought the race was after the season. Apparently you can't go over there until you do this race next week or something like that. So that's not happening.

But, I mean, I'm open to it, sure. It would be cool. The Argentinian fans, man, they're wild. My Instagram and Twitter and all that went up like 4% of my followers now are Argentinian. It went up like tenfold. 4,000 people followed me in one day. It's unreal.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. Look, I always got along with Augustin. Great guy. I have a lot of respect for what he's done, achieved, how he's adapted to, like, our lifestyle, English, all that. He's a wicked competitor. I think he's going to be really, really good eventually, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Scott, Alex. Thanks, guys.

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