

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon or good morning, everybody. As you know, it's certainly a quick turnaround for the NTT INDYCAR SERIES as we return to the road course at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Our guest today has some really good momentum heading into it. Last weekend was pole and podium on the streets of Nashville. Fourth place in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES season-long standings.

We welcome in Scott McLaughlin. First of all, thanks for doing this.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No worries. Thanks. Great momentum. I think we've worked it out as a team, sort of average five position after seven races, the last seven or eight races. We've been knocking out the results when we needed to. Yeah, really proud of it.

Hopefully we can do another one in the Gallagher car this weekend at the Gallagher Grand Prix.

THE MODERATOR: Heading back to the road course. A mixed bag for you there. What will it take to keep that momentum going fresh off Nashville?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, obviously a pretty important race for us as a unit, being Roger's house.

Look, I feel really strong. It hasn't been probably my best track the last couple years. I mean, ever since I qualified in the Fast Six my first year, my first Indy GP, it's been really tough since then.

For me, I've just got to make sure I lock in, work with the simulator, as we have been for the last couple days, the setup philosophy. I think we need to find something different to what we've been doing lately because it hasn't been good enough at Indy road course.

We'll keep working, hopefully it works this weekend, and carry that momentum through.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Last year you battled all the way to the last race of the year for the championship. This year Alex has a pretty big lead. Do you still see second place in the standings as a realistic goal for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, absolutely. For us, second is a massively realistic play, something that we're working on. At least top three obviously. We're not that far behind Dixon.

Yeah, for me, I'm working pretty hard on that right now with Benny, like I said before. But, yeah, certainly in our sights. If things happen, which I highly doubt it, Alex has been solid all year, we'll give it a go for the whole thing.

Absolutely our main objective right now is to get in the top three but maybe get second.

Q. Shane said earlier that you got to spend some time together. You were at the simulator together. From your side, how did that go?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, it was good. I saw him at the simulator the other day. I felt it was cool to have him here, come into our session, just watch me race around for a little bit. It was funny, the differences between NASCAR and INDYCAR. He was laughing at that.

Yeah, look, excited. I think he's going to jump on the pit stand or something like that during one of those sessions over the races this weekend. Super cool to be racing the same weekend as him and Brodie. It's going to be an awesome thing.

Q. Nobody in the series wishes any bad luck on a fellow competitor. Do you hope at some point Alex gets caught in a traffic jam or lost on his way to the track or something?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I would just like to have some of the luck he's had. If he can rub some of that on me, that would be fantastic (laughter).

No, he's doing a phenomenal job. He has the opportunity

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and he takes it. You can't be angry about that or whatever. It's just what it is. We've seen Dixon do it over the years. We have seen Josef have it, Will have it last year.

When things are going right, you have to take control of it, and he's done that. You can't be upset about that. You have to work harder and be better. I really enjoy trying to be better, trying to make my team be better. He's making us do that.

Yeah, certainly a good thing. We always knew he was going to be strong after he got through all of the legal drama, whatever was going on last year. That must have been pretty hard on the head. We always knew he was going to be really strong.

Q. Wanted to check in with you on your Indy road course form. Any reasons why it's been ordinary? Anything you've found in the simulator?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't know. It's just one of those things. I think we've battled with qualifying, which has been a bit of an Achilles' heel there. Haven't been in the Fast 12 the last couple. I feel that's been reasonably automatic for us on road courses. That's on us to find everything.

At the same time there's a lot of very -- it's a tight field there. If you miss it by a little bit, you're going to be back there. There's not much room for error. If you are off by a little bit, it does affect you.

I'm very confident we can go back there and be okay. I feel like our race car is really good. We always race well to the front. The qualifying car is definitely our Achilles' heel. Hopefully we get on top of that this weekend.

Q. You are right behind Dixon in points. What would be a suitable trophy for the top Kiwi in series?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: A beer, yeah (laughter). I don't know. We haven't really talked about it too much. I didn't think about that until you just raised it.

It would be pretty cool to beat him in the championship. A few things we've got to do to win. I'm proud of our fight back. Proud of what we've done so far. Me and Benny and the team, we've been really solid the last few rounds. That's really all you can ask. Keep the positivity up, hopefully we're there or thereabouts come Laguna.

Q. Shane is around this weekend. Are you looking forward to showing him around the INDYCAR paddock?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's going to be awesome. I don't know how much time he's going to have. I know he said he was going to pop past a fair bit, check it all out.

He's a racer, man. He loves it. Between his Truck and his Cup, he's going to be out here and supporting us where he can. I know Brodie is the same. Super excited to see these guys.

I'm not staying Sunday. I'm going home and going to watch it from my couch, which is a fantastic thing. No, I am actually flying to New York to pick up my dog and driving home 10 hours. I'll be driving and listening to it on the radio.

Q. From a driver's point of view, it's not often you get to go back to a circuit twice in a season. You're back at the road course this weekend. Does the track evolve from how it was in May to this weekend? Does the temperature difference in May to the height of summer impact how the car performs there as well?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: A little bit. It's also a little bit on the track usage side. I think we're going to be one of the first people on the track. There's not much support categories apart from NASCAR on the track. The rubber is probably going to be down.

Yeah, it's a little bit different in that regard, how you prepare. But, like you said, we've been there before and tried it. I feel like we got a really good handle of where we want the setup to be.

But, yeah, certainly it's going to be an interesting weekend if we don't get on top of the car straightaway in practice one. The temperature is a little bit different, like you said, a little bit hotter this weekend than it was in May. Thankfully it wasn't too cold in May, we got a nice little taste there.

Q. Touching on the NASCAR thing for a second. There's a lot of talk about Shane and Brodie. A big opportunity for him going under the radar, mainly due to Shane?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Absolutely. I think Shane's efforts at Chicago was always going to put anything under the radar. Brodie is very good. He's very good with the car engineering-wise. He's very talented. I fully expect him to be okay.

I think I guess he's going with a car that basically won last year, too. I think Reddick won last year. I think he could quite easily have the pace to win, as well. It's going to be super, super interesting how he goes.

Q. You mentioned Iowa race weekend, about how close you were working with Josef, how good Josef has been there. Will is pretty good at this track here. Have you bounced anything off Will? You mentioned how quick you need to get up to speed on Friday. Have you leaned on Will for anything for the Indy road course?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Not a huge amount. I mean, we talk a lot as teammates. The Iowa thing was sort of more so how I was racing, how I was trying to get through traffic and stuff. Josef's phenomenal in that regard.

I think we're in a really good spot Indy GP-wise, just from my knowledge. Yeah, I don't know. I think I can bounce a few ideas off him. Like I said, for me, it's just qualifying and figuring it out myself driving-wise.

Q. A year ago Gateway, you finished third. A year later you're fourth in points. Do you feel even further more at home with INDYCAR these days? Does this feel like you found a place here now, this feels home?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Oh, yeah, no, right now, like, I feel really at home. I think last year, especially, but even now. Even from knowing everyone in the paddock, seeing people, whatnot, it does feel like home. Everyone's been so nice and cool about us being here, which I appreciate.

A lot of people could be, quite frankly, bastards about me being here, not nice. But everyone was really welcoming. That's not just from a team level. That's drivers as well, team owners, everyone. It's probably the most welcoming sort of paddock I've ever been a part of. It's made us feel welcome.

From a performance perspective, obviously when we have good results, pole position, you're just adding to what I guess proving that you belong here. It's tough. This place, it's full of the best drivers in the world, most competitive teams.

I really enjoy it. Yeah, can't wait to be here for a long time to come.

Q. You were obviously frustrated in Nashville after the race. How quickly do you get over Nashville and turn to Indy?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, we've got a 24-hour rule. I wasn't too frustrated. I was more like a little bit bummed we missed out on the win there two years in a row, especially after having pole.

We've always got a 24-hour rule. But it really didn't take

me too long. I was happy with our momentum, like I said. We had a strong weekend, led laps, got pole. The last few races have been fantastic for us. I think we started on the front row four times in a row now, which is really cool.

If we can keep this momentum, it's a big thing in INDYCAR, the confidence you have, the momentum you carry, because you can lose it pretty quickly. Hopefully we can have another good race this weekend and carry it into the last races. Especially Portland last year, we led every lap apart from four of them. Hopefully really strong end of the season for us.

Q. Obviously you're going into the Indy GP this weekend with a lot of momentum from the streets of Nashville. What can you take from Nashville? They're two completely different tracks. In terms of your performance, what can you take from Nashville that you can bring forward to the Indy road course?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Not much. The street course and road course are very different, especially this one because it's like a billiard table out there, very smooth, a little bit different grip level.

I am really proud of our street courses. I felt like every street course this year we have been really strong. Road courses, as well, have been okay.

Look, not a huge amount. Like I said, it's momentum and confidence. I think we're in a nice spot as a team. We know what we want. Even though, like we said before, we've had some bad results, I feel like at Indy road course I'm talking about, I feel like really dug into why was that, where we're going with the car setup.

We really kind of revolutionized it a little bit. Definitely a new setup for me. I'm excited to try it. If it works, it works. If it doesn't, it doesn't. We have to try something. All our setups before haven't worked.

We're going to keep working here. I just got to take a bit of confidence and trust in the ability to tune the car nicely and we'll be good.

Q. Back in 2019 you had a big crash and brain injury concerns. We've seen what Simon has been going through at the moment. In terms of recovery, it's hard to tell if you're getting better or worse from a concussion. Based on your experience, how do you feel about this topic? When you've had big crashes in INDYCAR so far, what has been the procedure you've had to go through to prove your fit to drive?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I mean, every year we go



through tests with the AMR safety team and Dr. Julia. First class in the INDYCAR stuff, absolutely first class. Best I've ever been a part of. That's concussion tests, hearing tests, all that stuff. It's the most intricate process that I've been a part of in my motorsport career. That's not saying in Australia what I did was bad. This is just really thorough. I've really enjoyed that.

But I think what Simon is going through, I can't comment on how he's feeling or what his problems are. I'm surprised as everyone that he's not back yet, but it's obviously up to the teams to clear him and the doctors, and they haven't.

Main thing is him getting better. But I think if he's listening to them, it's the best advice you can get. It is truly some of the best stuff, some of the best advice that I've ever had.

I think the response from the AMR safety crew when we have problems, when we are having a crash, I mean, my crash at Indy a couple years ago, did a concussion test straightaway, had a full-body medical exam straightaway, x-rays, everything. It was really thorough.

He's definitely being given the right advice. There's nothing that's bad with the INDYCAR medical team. It's really, really strong. So, yeah, I can't really comment on his problems right now, though.

Q. (Question about Shane and INDYCAR.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, I agree with you. I think at the same time he's found a really nice home obviously doing what he's doing with Trackhouse and stuff. I think he's pretty solid on the whole NASCAR thing. That's awesome for him.

Yeah, I don't know. I think he would love to try here. He'd drive anything. He's a bit like myself. I don't think he really cares.

Yeah, I'd welcome him to INDYCAR. I'm never going to pressure him. He can come on his own. He has sufficient contacts and enough people that think he's great. He'll sort it out himself.

I think he's got a really nice home at NASCAR, for sure.

Q. In the post race interviews, you were pretty vocal relative to the fact of the restart at the end of the race. You also presented an intriguing solution. Have you ever had the opportunity to sit face to face with INDYCAR officials to express your concerns?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, we meet every week. I think there's things that they want to change during the year and

things they don't want to change. At the end of the year we always have a big sit-down with drivers, which is really awesome. They don't have to do it, but they do it. They definitely do listen to us.

I wasn't annoyed at having restarts at the end of the race. I guess you get annoyed when you're racing up the front, and you just know the cluster our rules create with the way that you can pass basically straightaway when a green flag flies. There is always the concertina effect, some people get runs, some people don't. Some people jump it nice. When you have people that really want to make positions from 20th back, causes untimely yellows, then we have red flags and stuff. It's frustration for the person at the front. That's all part of it.

I just feel like my suggestions were that's how I've done it in the past. That's how many other categories in the world do it. I think it's a very simple fix. I know for a fact, speaking to other drivers, it's a popular sort of idea.

But it's up to INDYCAR to implement that. I'm sure that all of us drivers will put forward our ideas, for sure.

Q. Your racing IQ is through the roof. If there would have been a similar green-white-checkered like you see in NASCAR, would the finish at Nashville have been any different, in your opinion?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Having a green-white-checkered?

Q. Yes.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, I don't think we need to do that at all. I think what we do now in terms of making sure we finish the race, red flagging when we can, I think that's fine. I don't think a green-white-checkered, I don't think we have the cars. I think it would be kind of dangerous if you think about it, especially crashing like they do.

I think it's just a quick fix in terms of the just where you position, where you can actually pass, where drivers can pass when the green flag gets flown so you can get the flow of the race going rather than, okay, it's green, out of turn 10 for us, the first two or three cars go single file, but then after that people have got different runs, people coming at different speeds, people see bigger opportunities, have bigger runs to make a pass.

It's just a simple fix that would just be equal for everyone, and that's why I think we should do it. I don't think we should do a green-white-checkered at all, no.

Q. This is like a spectacle of racing this weekend where you have the two top racing series based in the



U.S. racing on the Indy Roval track. Roger is known for doing everything first class. Do you guys kind of consider this a spectacle of racing? Are you stoked to have both series there where you can pick each other's brains?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I mean, I was actually chitchatting to Ryan Blaney the other day, a couple others. We don't really pick each other's brains too much. We do have a keen interest in what everyone is doing.

For me, I think it's interesting watching onboard from each other's cars. You see where NASCAR brakes compared to us, how fast they're entering the corner. I think there's different ways. I think it's crazy how you see the differences in lines and what everyone does throughout the weekend.

Everyone's stuck in their ways, stuck in doing what they're doing, what's best for their race car. Yeah, you don't really have a chance to really chitchat with everyone.

Q. Would it be interesting to see an IROC with both series in a cookie cutter car at Indy, you have a very special race for drivers in all series?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I can see where that would be cool. I just think we're at a very important part of all of our racing series. Only a few races till the Playoffs. Only a couple races till the end of the year for us.

I don't know if this time of year would work for something like that. I could see it would be pretty cool. But, yeah, that's probably not going to work at this time of year. I feel like everyone will want to focus on the real stuff.

Q. I can see Indianapolis Motor Speedway wasn't your best circuit. Considering your great momentum in the last three races, do these results make you confident to break this barrier and to achieve a podium in this mythical track?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, absolutely. I feel like, like I said before, our race car is really strong. It's just a matter of being able to qualify a little bit further up front to give us a better shot.

I have no doubt that we're not far away from hitting that nail on the head. I feel it's a track that I feel very fast at. For sure I think you can pass reasonably well there, too. It's just a matter of a few things going right for us earlier in the weekend. Hopefully we can get on top of that.

Yeah, I think I can really put a good solid race in to potentially get a podium and/or a win. I feel like we can do

that.

Q. You finished 2022 with a great momentum. How similar is the car, the team and yourself the last year comparing to this year to repeat or surpass the results?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think we've got a very similar team. Engineering, mechanics, everyone is very much the same. From a driver, I feel like I'm way more experienced, as well.

Looking at the setups, Nashville we basically ran the same setup as we ran last year. It was reasonably pretty good with a couple changes.

I think I'm in a really good head space, like I said before. I'm in a good spot to continue the same trend that we've been doing.

But you can't get ahead of yourself in INDYCAR. Like, things can change in an instant. You're only as good as your last race. Just keep focused, keep moving forward as a squad.

Like I said, confidence is a big thing. We've got plenty of that right now. We got to keep focused, keep working. Hopefully the good results continue to come. If they don't, we'll just figure out why they didn't come and work harder to get them back on the road.

Q. There is some speculation, rumors about the season INDYCAR 2024 including the Alex Palou situation that they can move to Formula 1. As a driver that is more or less secure, what is your opinion? Do you think if this is positive for INDYCAR, that there is a lot of doubts, speculations about the future of the drivers and the teams?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Well, I think people are really starting to understand that I guess INDYCAR is probably the most competitive series in the world. You can't really say otherwise. We're always within a second of each other. It's really solid. There's different winners. There's plenty of race strategy between the teams. Yeah, the racing product right now is really good. We see that in our TV numbers. It's really strong.

Obviously the speculation with Alex, probably no lie that he's wanted to go to Formula 1 and have that opportunity. I certainly hope he does get an opportunity. I think he's very good.

At the same time we want him still in INDYCAR, as well. But it's cool that Formula 1 teams are really starting to take

notice, other series around the world are starting to take notice of how good this product is, how good we are as a series. That's a testament to the people that run it and people in the outside marketing department, social media really promoting the series. I think we've really taken a step forward this year, which has put everybody on the map, which is really cool.

Hopefully Alex sticks around. If not, we'll see what happens.

Q. After Nashville, one of the first things you alluded to was the fact that next year's race is the championship race, how you hoped to win that. When you look at your recent streak of almost Alex Palou like consistency, do you feel like you're already laying the ground work to make that 2024 title run or is it too early to tell?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's too early to tell. I think everybody said the same thing last year we had a really strong end to the season. Things in INDYCAR can change a lot. You can have good results, then another driver like Alex can have sort of a strong mid-season and put the championship really in his favor, which he did this year to everyone.

I think what we're doing right now proves what we can do, but it's a matter of being able to do that all season. I have no doubt that we can have the pace to do it all season. It's a matter of just putting the races together. That's from my side and the strategist's side and the mechanics, the pit stops.

We're confident that we can keep doing this. We're confident we can keep the speed. Hopefully by the end of it, yeah, we are fighting for the championship next year at Nashville.

I don't think we can be upset with our year. I think we've had a really strong run so far. We have a few more races left. But we can certainly be in the top three, top two in the championship that. Would be a really proud moment for us.

Q. We have the Bathurst in November. Will really wants to be involved. Is there a chance we might see you on track in an INDYCAR machine?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I didn't even know that was happening. Yeah, I mean, that would be pretty cool to drive, for sure. I don't know what's happening there. Certainly driving an INDYCAR around Bathurst would be pretty awesome. I don't know how hard we could go. It certainly would be a pretty awesome experience. Love to

try that one day.

Yeah, I haven't heard much of it. It would be such a different experience for me because having been there in a super car and a GT car as well, to go there in an open-wheeler, that would be pretty wild, but something that would be really cool.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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