

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Will Power

Alexander Rossi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up the INDYCAR SERIES open test, looking ahead to the weekend, the Firestone Grand Prix of Monterey, Laguna Seca. Will Power joining us already.

Your thoughts on the repave, the track, the start to the weekend?

WILL POWER: Very nice. Very smooth. A lot of grip. Obviously tough offline. Yeah, it's incredibly fast. I don't know what was qualifying last year, pole? Five seconds quicker, yeah? Four seconds, yeah. It's getting there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What do you feel like we could see for a new track record here this weekend on Saturday?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it will be a mid six, yeah, in quallie by the time it's all said and done. Rubber down. Mid six.

I have to say, Bourdais, I remember in CHAMP CAR doing a 6.2. Bourdais did a 5.8. It wouldn't be an absolute track record, to ruin everyone's day.

Q. The additional four and a half seconds that you have, is that something you notice on the lap? Does it feel very different?

WILL POWER: Oh, yeah. A lot more grip, no bumps. You're almost flat in nine, almost flat in four. Yeah, a lot.

I mean, it feels the same sort of rhythm, same gears, but, yeah, a lot more speed. A lot more grip, ton of grip. So much so I couldn't actually turn the wheel in nine and ten. I actually had to change the setup so I could turn the bloody car. Kind of like Barber in that respect.

Q. Last time you came in here celebrating the championship. Maybe this season isn't what you wanted it to be. What do you make of what we've seen

in the last 16 races?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was a tough year. It was a tough start for me personally actually with what was going on with my family. That kind of continued all the way even in Road America, had a bit of an issue again.

It certainly affects your preparation and your mindset, that it does hurt you. Not an excuse, but I know how tough this series is, and you can't have any sort of issues off the track if you want to be good on the track.

All in all, ultra competitive series, so it's not hard to lose ground in the championship. Just takes a couple little mishaps and suddenly you're trying to claw back.

Yeah, definitely an off-season of reflecting on what went wrong, thinking about it, mental approaches, see what we can do coming back.

Q. Obviously at the beginning of the year you did the right thing having to be there with your family. When do you feel you were able to get back your focus?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's been a real slow process. It's a tough situation because if she's in a situation where I'm not sure what's going to happen with her, like I was at the point where I probably shouldn't be racing. You don't want your kid to grow up without parents. That was actually going through my mind at times.

Things have improved significantly. Feel certainly a lot more comfortable.

Q. For the race this weekend, it's a very impressive group of drivers fighting for their first victory this season, last chance. How fierce do you think that battle is going to be between yourself, between Alex, Pato, a lot of the other drivers that haven't cracked into Victory Lane this year?

WILL POWER: You'll fight pretty hard, I know that. You'll fight pretty hard. If there's someone there on the last lap, last corner, you haven't got a win, yeah, certainly will be floating through your mind about what you might just do (smiling).



But, yeah, obviously a lot about our qualifying and sort of being at the front. Definitely not going to race like it has done.

THE MODERATOR: Alexander Rossi joining us. We were talking about the repave. Track looks different. Does it feel different?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it was awesome. It feels like we have fast, modern race cars. It's amazing. I was telling (indiscernible) performance and balance-wise. It's a lot of fun.

This track was always I think a driver's favorite. Certainly in years past it was fun for a couple laps, then the tires would kind of start to drop off, which would make the race super exciting. It became less enjoyable inside the cockpit. Now, as hard as you want to try, there's (indiscernible), which is pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Will, does this open test give you any idea where the car can be improved for qualifying and for the race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, absolutely. Test day constantly working on where you can improve. Probably will compress everything more because everyone will have good cars by the time they get to qualifying.

Yeah, very handy to have the test day. Yeah, don't worry about it. I wasn't going to say that (smiling).

Q. The process of getting used to the grip with the new pavement, what's the process? You go through this corner, I go faster next time. What is the process of getting to the limit without stepping over it? How gradual is it?

WILL POWER: As you saw with all the red flags, it was pretty immediate.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, a lot of red flags.

Yeah, I mean, the other thing is not only, like, calibrating your mind in terms of what the limit of the car and the corner is, but every time you go out, there's more rubber that's going down, right? Even second, third run tires, you're still improving.

It's a moving target for a while, but then it will reach a point where it's not. I think that's when it gets challenging. Still, it just keeps going quicker.

Q. Can you compare and contrast this re-pavement and how the process of finding that limit is different from Road America?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think it's identical, honestly. Yeah, the same guys that adapted to that quickly I think will adapt quickly here.

Q. Alex, you're one of four guys, hasn't won this year.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Like Will said, it's certainly on your mind. I'm also in an intense race with the 26 and 27 (indiscernible). So, yeah, I've got a lot going on this weekend.

Q. When you talk about this place being a driver's favorite going all the way back to whenever that would be, the '90s, is that what 'high commitment' means when drivers talk about a high-commitment racetrack? This is the place that it's how fast you want to go, depends on how much you want to risk?

WILL POWER: Yeah, there's definitely that here. Corners that are pretty high commitment. You don't have much time to rest. It's a pretty rhythm track. You're always in a corner. A bit like a go-kart track. A lot of corners to get right, a lot. Easy to make a mistake. As you've seen the times, if you mess up one corner, moves you a lot of positions back.

Q. Juri Vips was among the fastest today. What did you think of him so far? One INDYCAR race, but looks like he's kept his nose clean.

WILL POWER: Yeah, not surprising coming from Europe. That's the sort of tracks those guys race on, just like this. He's obviously a very fast driver. Yeah, I think he'll be real good in the future.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, same. I think we've all witnessed what that organization has done this year. Like Will said, his results and pedigree in Europe kind of speak for itself. Like Will said, this is a quintessential European track now. It's high speed, very smooth, a lot of grip. Not like most of the places we go to.

Q. Is there a part of the track that surprised you that you had trouble or didn't have trouble in the past?

WILL POWER: Going flat through turn four was surprising to me (indiscernible).

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I wish, man (smiling).

I think all corners picked up the same amount of grip, right?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I would say so. Nine became a lot harder. I couldn't turn the bloody wheel.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Getting up there in age, so...

WILL POWER: Let's have an arm wrestle (smiling).

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think all the corners kind of took the same step in grip, so...

Q. Alex, what do you feel is doable for pole?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It all will depend on the reds, right? I mean, there's no guarantee that necessarily they're faster. If they are, like it might be 2/10ths quicker, 8/10ths quicker. I can answer that tomorrow.

WILL POWER: Six and a half.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: 66.5?

WILL POWER: If everything was normal-ish, half second out of the reds.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think it will be quicker than that if the reds are normal.

WILL POWER: Yeah, maybe.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: There were guys out there with a 6.9 on blacks.

WILL POWER: Bourdais is a 65.8.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: 65.8?

WILL POWER: A lot lighter, downforce. It was a cool car.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Pretty cool.

Q. You're the longest tenured driver at Team Penske. When the team sees Chip Ganassi Racing win another championship, how much does that light a fire under the operation? We got to go back and get our place on the championship ladder next year.

WILL POWER: Yeah, no, we got to work harder. This series, teams just continually get better. You cannot stop ever. Yeah, we'll reflect and have a good look at everything, try to understand where we need to develop.

I think we have a good chance to make a jump on the field with definitely a different car, different style of racing. The

way the hybrid will probably be used will change things. It's always an opportunity to get a little bit ahead of the game.

Q. With Ganassi, you would have to admit they have become the leading...

WILL POWER: They are the toughest team right now, no question, all around. Solid drivers, solid team. Yeah, very tough to beat.

Q. How important was it to hit the ground running today given the fact that the track has been repaved?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We didn't hear the first part.

Q. With the track being repaved, how important was it to hit the ground running today?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, man, super important. It certainly changed your approach to the car setup philosophy. Previously here you were always concerned about tire deg and trying to improve that through a stint. For the most part that seems to have gone out the window.

WILL POWER: Right.

Q. Will?

WILL POWER: Yeah, very, very different. Obviously traction is not a thing any more. Deg is not a thing any more. Much higher grip.

Yeah, quite a different setup.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming in, guys.

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