

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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### Scott McLaughlin

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: For the second straight year, joined by the champion of the Alabama Indy Grand Prix, Scott McLaughlin. Led 58 of the 90 laps today. First win of the season. Fifth of his career. Jumping 20 spots into ninth now in the points standings.

Your thoughts on a huge day for Team Penske, yourself getting the first win of the season.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We did what we thought we could do. It was execution. Like, probably one of the most I guess you could say so proud of the execution, the way that the team, particularly on the three cars, stuck together. We just kind of kept executing. That's our word for the rest of the year. Keep knocking 'em out. Points are points. Points are imaginary things. You just, like, get them. It's a reward at the end of the race.

It's about executing. The higher you finish, the more points you get. Ultimately it's a bonus at the end of the season. We're here to just take it race by race and see what happens towards the end.

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

**Q. The redemptive feeling that the team has to feel after the week they've had. How much do you feel it? How important is that to restore that to the team?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, there was never a lack of belief there. I'm more proud of just the people aspect of it, the way we just stuck together. We took the penalty, as we said at the start of the week. It was black and white. You move on.

We move forward together as a team race by race. We'll just keep working hard to make sure that we win as much as we can to put ourselves in the fight come September. That's what I'm super proud of, just the execution.

Yeah, we knew we had a fast car. We knew we were going to be there. There was a bit of confidence walking into the racetrack this weekend, even with myself. Just

love this place. Probably my favorite road course in America. Just really loved it.

**Q. How physically demanding is the track here?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That's very hard. Can't wait to see my WHOOP score. It was pretty crazy.

Just that was an intense mental battle. The start of the race was going pretty smoothly. I was like, This is good. We got back into the lead after our first pit stop. I had a seven-second lead. The caution comes out. I knew that was probably going to help the two-stoppers.

It's a matter of keeping your nose clean. Will passed me in that sequence. I got him back next lap. I knew if there was a caution that fell our way later down the track, I had to stay in front of Will. He was the guy I was racing.

Physically, mentally that's so hard. Got a couple blisters, whatever. They turn into callouses by now. You're building through the year. Thankfully this is not the first race of the year. It's nice to have a bit of match fitness. You could say I deserve a beer (smiling).

**Q. Going through the race, different strategies. How much in your helmet are you wanting to know? How do you stay calm during that? How much of that information are you looking for what everybody else is doing on strategy?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Probably changed my approach a little bit this year, knowing INDYCAR is a wildcard, the way the yellows fall sometimes, the way the strategies fall. You can't get yourself in a box to think are we good here, good there. You have to make the most of every opportunity you have.

I knew that we were probably on the back foot, then got a somewhat lucky yellow. Stingray I think put it in the fence. That was a way of us getting back to the point where these other guys had to take the fuel and hope they made the fuel.

I knew I had the pace. If I got out in front, nailed some laps, we might be able to come out in third and fourth. We



come out in the lead. I was like, This is good.

You just know. By now I know the way the race falls. It's just experience, man. I feel like in my fourth year I really understand it.

**Q. What makes this track so grueling besides the 17 turns, the heat?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: There's not much room for error. It's high speed, risk versus reward. You got to commit in areas that don't have much runoff. You make a mistake, you're in the fence.

Us race drivers, we're pretty sick. We kind of like that sort of stuff (smiling). We like the more risky stuff. I certainly do. The undulation, too. I think there's so many corners here that you can take different lines, come out in a similar speed to someone that takes it another way. That just lends to good racing. I really enjoy it. I think it's a beautiful place, as well.

**Q. In your experience in Australia, New Zealand in Supercars, is there a track that this reminds you of?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Probably like Bathurst. It's like a mini Bathurst that you have to commit over blind crests, big G loads. Probably like Bathurst without the walls. Their walls are like right on the racetrack like a street circuit.

You could even say honestly Phillip Island. Scratch that quote, can you? Phillip Island is probably the one. Up and down, very high speed, flowing. Wind is a factor. A lot of fun. I always went pretty good there as well. That was probably why.

**Q. Last year we watched Alex Palou win the championship. The situation happens with you guys in St. Pete. You talked to us on Thursday or Friday. You said that we can still win this championship. When you endured what you did last year, go through this process, how do you remain so confident through this?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's the third race of the year. So much time is left to go. We know how much of a wildcard INDYCAR racing is. I just know how good our team is, how fast my car can be. I feel like we just haven't reached... We're still building, as everyone is.

It's just hard to get into the cadence of the season. I feel like we always hit our stride around Detroit or just after. Just trust my guys, trust my team, trust my speed. Hopefully be okay.

**Q. How important is it that you didn't slowly creep into rebounding; this was an instant rebound after the circumstances?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's important. It's important that we knew we came here with a fast car. We knew we came here with a car that we could win the race. Like I said, I love this track. It's important that we used all that to put it to good use, get a nice little springboard back.

Yeah, it's like I said before, it's execution. I always said it before, if you have a car that can win the race, you have to win the race. If you have a car that can finish fifth, you finish second, that's a bonus.

That's exactly what we did today. It's a bonus. Glad for the team.

**Q. When you're coming through the bridge, all of a sudden you see what looked like a body laying on the side of the track, Georgina the mannequin, what did you think?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was a little mad. Then I realized that someone else had hit the fence. That wasn't what the yellow was for.

I love the artistic stuff, but it probably doesn't need to be above the track to cause a yellow like that. It's probably what will change next year maybe. I don't know.

I do love that part of this. It's unique. It's just a fun track. Yeah, if I lost to that, to a lady that fell off... I won't say anymore. It was a mannequin. It wasn't a real person.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I've seen it before. I thought it was a matter of time.

**Q. Last week you said even through last year, dealing with visas, taxes, your businesses, it took a toll on you mentally. You were starting to feel comfortable, especially after the finish at St. Pete. Everything that happened last week. Do you feel like this kind of resets things and puts things back on the path where it was as you head into the month of May?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, yeah, it's just a nice little momentum shift, right? We did it last year. We probably didn't use the momentum the way we wanted to heading into the month of May. We've got an opportunity to change that. I feel like we have a team and a car to do that.

We'll just keep working. It sounds pretty boring, just me



keep rolling back to execution. That's all it is. We don't have to try and be 3 or 4/10ths faster than everyone. We just have to be better in areas that they're not, execute to the highest level. That's all we can do, and the rest will play itself out. That's how we're looking at it right now.

**Q. I know once you get behind the wheel, that's all you're focused on. When you're celebrating, see how happy your team is, was there a little extra emotion because of the way the rest of the week went?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, for sure. Certainly it was a little emotional, for sure. It's just nice, yeah. It was just a nice cap. Obviously it was a pretty tough week.

**Q. When Will was in, he was lamenting when you were cycling through traffic he didn't fight harder to stay in front of you. Can you give your perspective on that? You definitely had the faster car. Did you feel like Will gave you a little bit of slack?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think we raced each other as hard as we normally do. We were smart about it. I think we had big picture.

At the end of the day, like I said before, I knew the pass with Will, that battle with Will when we were 20th or something, that was important for being positioned right if it all came our way like it did in the end. It was effectively for the race win, could you say.

We always race fairly. It's hard. He probably cut me a little bit of slack. He still tried pretty hard. Yeah, I always enjoy racing Will. A lot of transparency there between the two of us, even the start of the race, for us to get through 1-2. Ultimately him being in second was great for me. It's just working together, which is really nice.

**Q. On Friday Tim Cindric said he expected you to be behind the eight ball because everybody else had tested besides Penske. Were you surprised how good Penske was all the way through the weekend?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. I don't want to sound cocky, but I certainly felt like we had a really fast race car. It was hopefully we dropped it off at the track and be okay.

You just have to roll in with the confidence that you know what you've got as a race package. I hardly touched it from the start of practice one to the end of the weekend.

Thankfully, hopefully we come back in year three with the same car. I doubt it because of the hybrid system and different weights. But it would be fun.

**Q. Will said when you got caught back in traffic, how the balance of the car changes because of the dirty air. How off-putting is that psychologically when you've been running in the clean air for so long?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it certainly is a bit of a shock to the system just thinking about where we positioned the cars and whatnot. You just got to build up to it nicely, not overstep the mark too quickly, figure out what you got, then attack.

Sometimes you don't have as much time as you want, but it's a bit of the seat-of-the-pants stuff. That's where Will is amazing. He's an amazing driver with feel and instinct. He's a good teacher with that, someone I can analyze to be better with.

It's a lot of fun trying to figure out any (indiscernible) positions your car should be in. It's really cool.

**Q. Did you find the new aeroscreen was warmer in the cockpit for you today over version one?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The forced airflow more so. Yes, we got a little bit more airflow for sure, but the forced air into our helmets is a little less. The way the air is coming into the windscreen is a little different and that little inlet is not as effective.

We have mentioned that to INDYCAR. They're working with us on it. It's a slow process. We worked with it on Dallara. Just thankful we have something like that above our head keeping us safe.

**Q. Coming out of all the stuff that came out last week, seeing the fans react the way they did, sort of business as normal, is that the reaction you were expecting from the fan base?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, the fans are passionate. We love them. If you're getting booed, that's a good thing. They're passionate. They love the sport. If you're getting cheered, it's the same thing. I've always looked at it sort of two ways.

You don't want to be a guy they don't like. It doesn't affect the way I'm racing. I just hope that hopefully I race with a lot of integrity, honesty. What happened and transpired last week was just a mistake. It's a human game, as well.

I've always had a tremendous amount of support here in America. I've always been grateful for that. Hopefully we can win a few people back. But certainly a lot of the people that say a lot of crap online, on social media, they're probably the people that will come shake your hand and

say, Good job. It's tit for tat. It's part of it. That's part of being in the spotlight as well.

**Q. Has there been a shift in the dynamic and camaraderie with the competitors on other teams?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I had a number of people text me last night congratulations, great lap. I feel like it's been pretty nice overall. We're all competitors. Obviously everyone had their emotions at the time. It was pretty raw initially.

I think it's been pretty nice and everyone has been really, really cool. Just press on, business as usual. I can't control their emotions. It's up to them.

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