

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, July 14, 2024

Alex Palou

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Finishing second, Alex Palou. Big bounce back, what you needed after last night.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, absolutely. It's been a weekend where we had a ton of speed compared to what we had before with qualifying third and second. Was a shame yesterday obviously with the pit stall on the first pit, then the crash during the second stint.

Yeah, happy that today we're in second. Bit of a shame that couldn't really do anything to pass or to do anything, so...

Bit of a boring race for everybody: drivers, media.

THE MODERATOR: Boring at 180 miles an hour?

ALEX PALOU: It's the most boring thing I've ever done. It was yesterday, as well.

Yeah, it's a shame that we couldn't really put a better show. I think everybody will agree that it was a very boring race to drive.

THE MODERATOR: Our third-place finishing driver as well, Scott McLaughlin. Backing up his win from last night.

Congratulations, Scott. Nice weekend. Track record, pole, couple podiums. Your thoughts on race two here this afternoon?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, as soon as I saw that car on the inside of the apron, I knew we were pretty much screwed. You have to stay long to eliminate risk of a yellow. As soon as the yellow came out, I pretty much knew that, yeah, Alex was going to get me, along with Will, who hadn't pitted yesterday.

That is what it is. It's the game. You have them, you lose them. It's just part of it. Yeah, really proud, man. This weekend was just exactly what we needed. I feel like we

built some really nice momentum. Hopefully we can keep carrying this for the rest of the year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Alex, you said it was just a boring race. What can be done to change the product and help out the level of competition or lack thereof that we saw today?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, even when leading, being in the middle of the pack yesterday, I don't know, the INDYCARs we had, the package of INDYCAR tire, aero, engine, whatever we had on track this weekend, it was impossible to make it run.

So I don't know. It was never an issue before. It was a repave for our cars. But having that said, we've seen other series here run well.

I mean, we cannot compare. It's like putting a Moto GP on dirt. It's a cool track, but you cannot put it on the same and expect a very nice race.

It was a shame because it used to be a really cool race I think for the fans with tons of overtaking and tons of tire deg and things to do.

I don't know. I don't have the answers.

Q. Without that caution, did you think you would have had a better shot?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was on the undercut. At the end of the day, I mean, I would have come out in front of Alex. Will would have had to pit in a couple laps' time. That's just how it rolls, man.

Yeah, it's part of the deal. You just roll with it. I've won a race by a delayed yellow. I've lost a race now. It's just part of the deal. I think everyone will have one or two of those in their career.

Q. Alex, last year you set your expectation level at finishing seventh in both races. You figured that would be good enough for you to keep the points lead. Apparently your expectation level has risen much

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higher. Had chances to win the race today. How much has that expectation level changed for you?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, I think we went from dramatic performances here to, like, having a really fast car and being able to drive confidently in both qualifying and the race.

I think you cannot really judge the race much on pure pace because nobody was able to push 100%. But I think you look at qualifying and some overtakes, some stuff we did, yeah, it's 10 times better than what I've done in the past.

For sure a big step up. Still a long time to go. I cannot call myself an INDYCAR driver yet.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, you definitely can (laughter). Don't worry about that.

ALEX PALOU: No, but I agree with you. I've been saying that, that it's something I need to do. We were close today.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That wasn't a shot at you, by the way. I think you're an INDYCAR driver.

ALEX PALOU: I know. I know. I've been saying the same, kind of. I'm 50%, right?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: You're like 75. Close.

ALEX PALOU: That's good. We still have four chances this year, so...

Q. Do you think what's happened here and what happened at Texas Motor Speedway, you can run the same road courses maybe as NASCAR, but it's very difficult to run the same ovals because what they try to do to make their cars work on ovals seems to be a detriment for you guys?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The outside lane can work in the first 5, 10. I saw Ericsson using it to get a pass on Will and a few other things behind these two.

But personally, like, Firestone do an amazing job for us. We need to somehow work a way to get the second lane to work. That's after 30, 40 laps. Whether that's a compound that goes on the racetrack or something that acts with our tire and allows us to continue running that second lane.

Like, that thing worked. I passed three cars today on the outside of the restart. Like, it does work. I think it will work through the race if you can just eliminate some of the excess rubber that goes on there.

I think the package could help. I think INDYCAR could go to work with downforce levels, working with Firestone on a few other things. But you just can't blame the track because at the end of the day they have to repave this at some time. That's just how it is.

If we can somehow get our cars working when a repave happens and know what we need to do to make it work, we won't run into these issues.

I feel like we go into it and not do the right amount of study or whatnot to get it done and to get it to work. That's not a shot at the sport, not a shot at anything. It's working together with the amazing people and the geniuses we have up and down pit lane. It's just a matter of making it work.

Q. Alex, can you talk a little bit about the crash, the process of turning the car around last night? Would you support running doubleheader if INDYCAR running doubleheaders in the future?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, the crash, I mean, was a bit surprising where it happened. It happened really night. I was not trying to make a pass or anything.

Having that said, the tires were really, really old. Nothing broke mechanically on the car. Yeah, I just lost it. Then, yeah, it was not easy for the team to turn the car around. It was a small hit, but still it was a good enough hit that you had to take everything apart, look at everything, because we were not going to have an install there. We actually got it, which was very useful.

I think they slept something like three hours tonight, so not ideal. I never support doubleheaders in INDYCAR. Like, not even on a road course. It's not because of I'm not good here or anything. I think if it's a great race, it's good to leave it there. The fans can enjoy for one day. We can put so much effort in one race. Everybody can relax a little bit more. It's not so hard on the cars and especially on our crews.

Then if it's a bad race, you can have a doubleheader of bad races like we had this weekend.

Q. Scott, tell me about points and championship. You came in 105 points down this weekend. You cut that almost in half. You're in the game.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, this bloke next to me doesn't make many mistakes. When he does, you have to capitalize. You're an INDYCAR driver (smiling).

No, I think we knew we would be there, thereabouts.



Qualifying was our first objective. We managed to put ourselves in a good spot. I firmly believe, we probably would have led that race in the second stint as well and be under control as much as we did the first stint.

We could easily have gotten two wins, but we got two podiums and one win. That's a great day. I come into some tracks now... Gateway, Toronto. Portland I've won before. I feel really strong the end of the season. A couple ovals as well. So, yeah, it's anyone's game.

Q. About what we could do to make the track better, I understand when you tested here two weeks ago you were really happy with what was happening then. You were using the second lane well. Is that not true?

ALEX PALOU: No.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No.

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