

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, August 16, 2024

Scott McLaughlin

Post-Qualifying Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by the NTT P1 award winner for the second straight year here at Worldwide Technology Raceway, Scott McLaughlin, driver of the No. 3 Dex Imaging Team Penske Chevrolet. Fourth NTT P1 award of 2024, ninth of his career, back-to-back here at Worldwide Technology Raceway.

Good news is you get to actually start and enjoy pole position tomorrow. Your thoughts on today?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, that's absolutely a bonus, but the Dex Imaging Chevy was just great from the jump. We had a focus this morning, well, early noon, just to focus on the qualifying car because we knew we only had a short run before qualifying, and we knew how important it is to be at the front here. It went to plan. The car has been great from the jump. We're in a really good spot, obviously, for tomorrow.

As we know, this is INDYCAR. Anything can happen. But we'll try to stay on our toes and focus on this last practice session tonight just to get our race balance right, and hopefully we can come with a pretty fast printer wagon for tomorrow.

Q. What was the feel of the car for practice, and now that you have pole, how relieved are you for starting up there with how difficult it seems everyone is thinking it's going to be tough to pass here tomorrow?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, we'll find that out in race balance here in a little bit, but I think it'll be pretty reasonable. Car, as I said, straight out of the hauler was awesome. I think we're in a really good spot, obviously, for tomorrow, to maybe make some points back here, and there's no doubt in my mind that we can put ourselves back in the hunt with a good result tomorrow. That's our big focus right now.

But yeah, proud to get the pole, and I actually forgot the last half of your question.

Q. For high line practice later on, do you think that'll

create a big difference for tomorrow?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We'll see. I mean, it can't hurt, that's for sure. More downforce on the cars this year. I think they've made all the necessary steps to help that.

You certainly hope so for the race sake.

But I still think it's going to be somewhat of a track position race, but I think if we can do this high line practice and then with the extra downforce, who knows what will happen, and I'm sure the restarts are going to be pretty hectic, as well, so that's always good fun.

Q. Have you and Power talked since Toronto?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, we talked basically straight after the race and then throughout the week. We're good as gold. Just a couple Australians butting heads -- well, I'm not Australian, I'm a Kiwi, but down under. All-Blacks versus the Wallabies, we're used to that rivalry, but me and Will, we work together really well. I think all three of us work together really well.

You're never going to have it be 100 percent the whole way. You're going to have ups and downs, but it's how you rebound from that, and I think we've rebounded really well. We're working together, and certainly we both want to win this championship, so we're working towards that.

Q. Looking at this championship, you've got a good amount of ground to make up but also four short ovals where you've run particularly well over your career. Do you still feel like you're part of this championship run at 83 back?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, yeah, for sure. Yeah, 100 percent. There's no doubt I've come from basically the back at the start of this year, and we've found ourselves in position in less races. There's anything that can happen in this sport. It takes one bad race from Palou, and everyone is jumping down his neck.

I think we're well in reach to get there if we can perform well on the ovals, which I know I feel comfortable on the ovals now. There's no doubt in my mind we can get there.

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Yeah, 100 percent confidence.

Q. Do you feel like this is the track that you feel most confident among the three ovals? I know Nashville, Milwaukee, a lot of folks, including you, have never run at. Is this an extra important one given your history and experience here?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, Milwaukee we finished quickest at the test. I felt pretty good there. I feel like from an oval perspective, it's a very comfortable position. It doesn't take thankfully too long to learn some ovals, so Nashville -- I think a lot of people are going to be learning it, and I feel like I can get on top of it as best as anyone, but you've got to have that confidence in yourself, that ability, and hopefully we can put ourselves in position over these next coming races.

This one, we take it bit by bit. I don't really care. I just drive the car and hopefully we're quick, and I think we'll be okay.

Q. It seems like you guys have adapted to the hybrid on the ovals better than anyone else. Is that because you guys have pretty much tested it more than a lot of people? You were a key team for Chevrolet during the off-season.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I didn't think there was much to adapt to, to be honest. The hybrid is there, yes, but we're not using it probably nearly as much as the road courses, street courses, and from the looks of it, from what you see on TV and data and all that stuff, everyone has got the same process, the way they go about it.

No, I don't think we -- for sure from a driving perspective, it was nice to feel the weight of the car and stuff and having that opportunity to do that, but I think as a team, it's very well documented -- I think INDYCAR have been great, very fluid with the situation and transparent to all the teams up and down pit lane, and I think it's why you've probably seen it run reasonably smoothly.

Q. But it seems your team has adapted to it better with the weight, the extra weight. The setup seems to be better than everybody else.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I debate that. Look, on the oval, yeah, maybe. We've always been strong at Iowa. But Herta got a pole there, I got a pole there. Here we got pole. We got pole last year.

I always feel like we've got fast cars, which is an added bonus at the start, and then you add the weight. It's just weight. You've just got to try and adapt to it, and everyone

has got very smart engineers up and down pit road that can adapt to that and understand what we need to do to get to that point.

Sure, it was nice to drive the car a little bit over the off-season, but I think when we got to this point, it's every man for themselves.

Q. I believe the last four visits on ovals you've taken at least one of the poles. What has clicked for you in the last year with regards to qualifying on ovals?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, me and Benny were talking about it, my engineer. Our average must be pretty cool since we've started working together. From '22 onwards, even '21, I've felt strong, but it's just nice to have the confidence in the race car you're driving. The team give me a great car, and I'm able to just execute the way I want to.

I think I like oval qualifying because it replicates a little bit -- might sound weird, but it does replicate Supercars in some ways and the top-10 shootouts we used to do back there and all that sort of stuff. Getting my tires up to temp and trusting the tires into Turn 1 or whatnot, it's been a strong suit of mine in the past, and probably a little bit more aggressive in that regard, but yeah, I really enjoy it.

Love ovals. I think it's the backbone of our series, and I've enjoyed having a lot more on the schedule, or at least a couple more this year.

Q. You said you have some sort of procedure you run. Can you go into detail a little bit more?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I cannot go into detail, but I made a mistake, but I thankfully held on. I thought that was probably going to what what maybe Will or Palou could have got me on, but yeah, it was just something that -- it's part of my process just with the car.

Q. These procedures you're talking about, and I'm watching drivers, does it feel like you're doing the AABB up-down-up-down thing like it's a video game?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, lucky I play a lot of Call of Duty, so I sort of feel like I'm pretty good with hand movements and looking around. For sure. It's a lot going on, especially short oval qualifying. But even like in street courses at Toronto and stuff.

But I think if you talk to people up and down pit road we've actually enjoyed that. It's been quite fun, and it's rewarding when you do a good job or it works out in your favor.

Yeah, I've enjoyed it, but there's a lot more to do than there used to be.

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