

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the 2024 champion here at Portland, Will Power. His third win of the season, second here in Portland. Jumps back into second place in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES points championship. 44th career win. Sixth podium of the season. The 104th of his career.

I know it's much more than this, but to simplify it, it kind of all began and ended in turn one, the opportunity to pass Santino there. How huge was that?

WILL POWER: Turn one, Santino and I talked about the start, he was not going to block or anything. He braked earlier than expected, because I braked earlier. I was going to let him lead. Yeah, he's a good teammate. Very fair. I have to thank him for helping me out there.

But yes, from there it was a pretty I guess straightforward race of playing the game with in and out laps against Palou. I think we definitely had a better car on reds. We could pull a good gap. I think black tires at the beginning, that got a bit tough.

Yeah, man, a good day. Went green for a long time. Kind of mentally drained. I don't have that many words. But yeah, it's good stuff.

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with questions.

Q. Would you be willing to go on the Masked Singer?

WILL POWER: Masked Singer? No, definitely not good enough for that. I'll do some karaoke.

Q. This win brings you 54 points within Alex. Him finishing second, you trimming 12 points off of your gap to him, how winnable does this still feel going into the final three oval races?

WILL POWER: I would say if he had finished ahead of us, it would almost be over. It just kept it alive. Ultimately, one DNF for him, one win for me, you're right there. Certainly within 20 points. That makes it very possible it could

happen.

Yeah, I said going into this race we simply have to win. We simply have to at least finish ahead of him, but ultimately win to keep this thing alive. That's what we did.

It's going to be the same every week. It's going to be the same every race from here out. Just got no choice but to be ahead of him or it's over.

Q. Would you envision over these final three races the team putting all of its eggs in your basket to try to get you a championship or will you still be racing your teammates for race wins at Milwaukee and Nashville?

WILL POWER: I think if we have the cars to win, and we want to win the championship, yes, that's probably what we should do with three to go. We should probably, yeah, be looking at how can we get the 12 car in the best possible position. Really that's our only chance. We got three really good drivers - four really if you include Santino - that are capable of running at the front.

Yeah, that can take up a lot of positions. I'm the head of that group, we win the race, that starts to make things look possible.

Yeah, we'll talk about that when we get to Milwaukee, see if that's a possibility.

Q. A doubleheader at Milwaukee that we haven't raced on in nearly a decade, a track at Nashville that you may only raced on once in your career, how unknown is what we're getting into over these final three races?

WILL POWER: Yeah, quite unknown. You don't even know, like, can you pass at Milwaukee? Will qualifying be a big deal? How will this play out? I don't even think we've run on the tire we're going to run. Yeah, a very, very interesting three races that you really don't know where everyone's going to stack up.

All the ovals we went to this year, we've had history on, very good setups and data for. Milwaukee, we tested there a couple times now. But it's really difficult to tell till you get in the race situation to know how good your car really is.

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Q. About the 75th lap or so, it looked like Alex wanted to get racy with you. Were we seeing that correctly?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I had traffic. I was at the mercy of the pace of the car in front. I saw that gap just shrink really quickly. I think he pulled into the pits or I passed. However that played out. As soon as I got clear track, I knew I could put quite a bit of time into him. Especially at the end of the stint, it seemed like his car used the tire more than ours. On reds we were simply better. Our car was really good on red tires.

Yeah, kind of equal I'd say on blacks. He even looked like he dropped off on blacks. It was really a lot to do with traffic management. If it was a clear track for me, I always felt I could pull a gap on him.

Q. Last weekend was not what you wanted. Your blood pressure was considerably higher. How do you deal with those ups and downs?

WILL POWER: I get mad very quickly, but I get over it very quickly. I mean, I've grabbed Scott Dixon at Road America, then got into the car and said, Sorry, man. It's all good. Like, got into the medical car a few seconds later.

I just am like that. When I'm mad, it looks worse. My bark is worse than my bite. I'm like not that (smiling). I forgive very quickly and easily and move on. I know everyone in this series is trying to do the same thing. We're all lucky to be here.

Last week I saw a lot of points just... A great race really. I would have to say the most fun I've had in years on an oval finished in a bad way. I enjoyed the race, I had so much fun, then it finished like that. Kind of disappointed. Late restart. I think if we went earlier, it wouldn't have happened.

Yeah, one day later I'm wake surfing with Josef, laughing. Talking to Malukas and joking. Yeah, it's just how I am.

Q. You said at the beginning of the race that Portland had a special place in your heart because it was the first place you ever tested. How does this win and being able to continue that championship fight rate for you?

WILL POWER: Man, anytime I win in this series, I feel so lucky. Like it feels like it's so impossible and hard to win. I was thinking through the race, No way I'm going to win this. He's going to get me. But you do your absolute best.

When you get a win, it's a very good feeling. It's very, very

satisfying. It takes so much, it really does. To get through all those rounds in qualifying, to qualify right at the front, that is so difficult in this series. Then to execute completely on a race day with so many good guys and teams around you, it really is a big deal just to get on a podium in INDYCAR.

Every win I get now, it's so special. It really means a lot. It's adding to my win list. It's not like I'm racing for another decade, put it that way. Yeah, I work really hard at my craft, so it's very satisfying. I know all the guys on the car really deserve it. Best pit crew in pit lane. They have been the quickest the last couple years. They are again this year. That's a hard situation to come upon. To be in that situation, to be a good driver in a great team, having the opportunities to win. Bloody winning a race is a big deal.

Q. Anything specific about Portland itself?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it's the first track I ever drove at in the U.S. First time I ever drove an INDYCAR. I still remember it driving down the back straight, I had the thought, Man, I could be paid to do this. That was with big horsepower days, too. Yeah, I still remember that thought, driving down that back straight. I remember that day, I do. I remember driving that car. It had understeer. Stalled it a couple times trying to leave the pits. It was good memories. A long time ago. Almost 20 years ago. I think it's 20 years ago. Crazy, cool.

I do love it. Yeah, I mean, I have that memory for this place. I'm glad we came back here, we started racing here again. It was a cool place when I got to race here in Champ Car.

But I love all the tracks. When I walk in the paddock, it's like it would be really tough for me to walk away from this sport. It really would. The feeling of being a part of something, trying to accomplish something with a group of people, yeah, I think you'd be pretty lost. If I stopped, I'd be very lost with what to do.

I love racing. I love the paddock. I love the people. Feel lucky to do it.

Q. When you were going down that back straightaway, did you have any thought you'd be doing this for this long?

WILL POWER: No. Yeah, no way that I thought I would have driven for the best team in the U.S., won on ovals, won the Indy 500. All those things. Won a championship. Yeah, not a chance.

I worked very hard always, was very determined. It's



something that unfolds very slowly. It's not a big shock that it happened now. When you reflect on it when you came here all those years ago, it was a dream. What I've done, I've lived out my dream, absolutely. I've just lived it out.

You need to reflect sometimes and appreciate that when you get mad or disappointed about something that happens. You're really lucky to be here.

I enjoy doing appearances now. I enjoy media, all that stuff. It's all great stuff. I give the young guys a hard time if they complain about it. Man, you could be working in an office, you could be working construction, you're lucky you're in this very small group of people that get to do this for a living, so enjoy it.

Q. How similar or different does this title fight feel compared to 2022?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's very different. Like, it's a must-win situation almost right now. Can take a little bit more risk. You probably have a little less pressure 'cause you're not the one sort of defending this points lead.

Believe me, it's nice to have the points lead. It's much better to be in his position by a longshot. Yeah, different year. I kind of learnt from his championship last year, the style of '22 wouldn't have worked that year. You had to win. That's what this year is.

This year was a year of a lot of mistakes from a lot of drivers. Last two races. Toronto, think about it, if I didn't try that move on Scott. If Malukas and I didn't have that issue, cause that yellow, suddenly you're looking pretty good. Everyone has let some big points go. Palou at Iowa. It's been one of those years where a '22 sort of year would win it, yeah.

Q. If you've let yourself think about this at all, what would a third championship mean to you?

WILL POWER: Oh, yeah, tremendous, tremendous in many different ways. To win in this series, at this time, it's so difficult. You get a third championship from a deficit of 54 points at this point, come back from a deficit like that, yeah, that would be amazing. It would be absolutely amazing. To finish on all ovals, as well, kind of going back to my early days, sort of unfinished business there.

Yeah, it's a tough climb from here, but not impossible.

Q. Consistency is a thing that wins the championship, but also there's the consistency from the guys that deliver that car to you. How hard is this run to the final group of races for them?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it is very much about the consistency of pit stops, car preparations, the guys that build the engines. All those things are going to play a part. Yeah, kind of a grueling season in that they have to pack up now, rebuild a car, rebuild three cars before we go to Milwaukee. It's the same for every team, yeah.

I mean, it's absolutely a team sport, I can tell you that. Just having been in this for so long, like I said, to get the ingredients of the fastest pit crew, the best team, the best engine, and being one of the best drivers, to get that combination is so difficult. You look through the whole field, all those guys are capable of winning.

So yeah, got to feel fortunate to be a part of a team like Penske where you're given those ingredients.

Q. Do you feel maybe the Dixon factor, considering he's won at Nashville before, can that have an effect on the championship if they let him loose to cover for Palou?

WILL POWER: Yes. Having tested there with Dixon, Dixon is very good at Nashville. I said that before. I could see him winning that race, see him being very competitive. He could play a part, absolutely, in a scenario where we must win, you're probably going to be fighting Dixon.

Q. The key message still is what you've been saying, stay ahead of Alex at all times?

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's our only shot. That is our only shot. We must be continually finishing ahead of him and see where it falls.

Q. This is your first three-win season since 2018. What's made the difference to regain the winning form?

WILL POWER: It's never just one thing, to be honest. I think Chevy made a gain last year. Just with that, you've got more chance to qualify in the top six. Qualify in the top six, you certainly have more chance of a win.

If I look at 2022, there were a lot of, like, races where I went from 16th to third, got a lot of podiums, a lot of second places. Had I qualified slightly better, those potentially could have been wins. It's just putting yourself in that position, having the car.

Yeah, you are constantly working on that stuff. One year you're a little conservative. Next year you see Palou win with a bit more aggression, so you become a bit more aggressive. I never stop digging and looking.



I actually came into this season with the mindset I must win multiple races. It's been a long time since I have. Yeah, that's basically a lot of factors go into it.

Q. Is there anything with your specific race craft that you've changed or maximized on now better than previously?

WILL POWER: No, not really. No, I race pretty similar. A couple mistakes this year that I really reflect on that is uncharacteristic of sort of the 2022 year.

No, I have the same mentality. I'm very calm in the car always. Rarely do I get flustered or say something on the radio. I'm less calm out of the car if something happens, but...

Yeah, you just change small things. Built this big toolbox of skills over the years, worked on the mental aspect a lot, which just comes with age, to be honest. No particular thing.

You have your goals coming into a season, but you are just walking that tightrope of aggression versus consistency. If you look at Dixon, 99% of the time he will not go for a move that's sort of in a 50/50. He will weigh on the cautious side. That's won him championships. Palou is further to the aggressive. But he walks that tightrope really well of aggression versus reward.

Yeah, I'm always playing on that one side or the other. '22 I was too conservative. '23 I had a bad year. This year maybe I'm a little bit over-aggressive at times. But that's the game you play. You got to hit that sweet spot. It's tough.

Q. You have this interesting ability to have a really bad race, get mad, cool down, but come back and funnel what was bad into something positive. What is it? Is it a thing?

WILL POWER: Ultimately I came here, like, I have to qualify really well because of the first corner. But ultimately I have to win to keep this thing alive. Yeah, that's what I did.

Yeah, no, it may look like that, but that's not really get mad and do anything. You just focus in. I try to do that every weekend.

Yeah, those couple of 18th places were just from bad restarts actually. I mean, yeah, both of them were in restarts on a short oval.

Q. Recently we had news confirming David Malukas heading to Foyt. Some believe he could be moving into your car at some point in time in the future. Won more races than any of your teammates this year. Share some thoughts about wanting to continue.

WILL POWER: I want to continue. I'm not retiring. I'm not. I'm just simply not retiring. Yeah, I know people probably like to spread that around, rumors or whatever, in the hope that they can take my seat. Yeah, I'm staying here for a while. I'll get better every year, man. I get better every year. I feel like that.

Q. We haven't had a lot of kids from Down Under doing big things on the Road to Indy for a while. Lochie Hughes heading to INDY NXT. Any thoughts about that?

WILL POWER: I really want to help him get to INDYCAR. I think he's very good. He's very focused, determined. Yeah, we spoke I think at Iowa. He didn't have many races after that. He asked me how to approach a championship. The long or short of it is, man, all you can focus is on what you can control, nothing else. Forget about the rest. Focus in. It's your ticket to ultimately INDYCAR, but definitely Indy Lights.

I want to help him get to the INDYCAR. I want to see another Australian get a good seat and succeed here in America. He's good. He deserves it.

THE MODERATOR: Busy between Miles and Lochie.

WILL POWER: Yeah, tough one. I want to see them both succeed. I think Miles will be fine. I think ultimately he's got Penske's help. He's pretty good. Lochie needs more help. It's very tough from where he is.

You've seen Indy Lights champions move on. It's been good, yeah.

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