

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Hello, everyone. Glad you could join us. A very busy stretch begins this weekend. Seven races effectively in seven weeks. The second oval of the season coming up at World Wide Technology Raceway. The first Sunday night prime time race for the series with coverage beginning at 8 p.m. eastern on FOX.

Scott McLaughlin clearly loves qualifying and racing at the track. Two-time NTT P1 award winner and runner-up in last year's race after race-high led 67 laps. Four starts on the mile and a quarter. Scott, a fifth, a fourth, a third and a second-place finish, not in that order. Only one step to go before it's all said and done. Maybe it will happen on Sunday.

The driver of the No. 3 DEX Imaging Team Penske Chevrolet joins us. Happy belated birthday.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Thanks for the present of joining you guys today.

THE MODERATOR: It's going to pick up fast and furious beginning this weekend. I'm sure you're looking forward to getting back to St. Louis.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, absolutely. I spent a bit of time in St. Louis last week. Everybody was pretty pumped with how everything was.

Yeah, really excited to get back there. Obviously it's a track that I've love and I've always gone pretty well at. I go into a place there with a lot of confidence. The way that the season's going for me right now, I need a bit of a rebound here, just get going. The last two events have been pretty tough.

Yeah, all good. We'll just go in there with a lot of confidence and see where it ends up.

THE MODERATOR: It's almost like a season reset after the weekend off. It's been tough for a lot of drivers considering what Alex has done so far here in 2025. What is it about St. Louis that's been a really good track for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's probably the closest that you have on an oval or a short track oval that we have that we go to, kind of replicates a road course in some ways. Just fast, sweeping corners, turns three and four. One and two is tight and twisty. Down a couple gears using the brakes a little bit. That's another thing, it's very unusual to use a brake pedal on an oval in an INDYCAR. We do that every lap.

I just really enjoy that. I enjoy that style of racing. Definitely started to come into my own a little bit. I got asked sort of last week do I enjoy ovals more. I have to say I do now. I think it's like such a refreshing change for me in my career. Every time I go on an oval, I feel really confident, definitely feel like it's my kettle of fish. I really enjoy that.

But at the same time I've had a lot of people that I've learnt off through this time at the team that helped me along the way, got me comfortable, like Benny, my engineer. It's all good.

THE MODERATOR: Who would have thought a couple years ago, especially the first test at IMS, that you'd be an oval guy.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, I remember that test. I remember doing the COTA test in 2020, then going to Texas Motor Speedway the week after. I think my warm-up lap was the fastest I'd ever gone in a race car before.

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

Q. A chance to race probably mostly under the lights here on Sunday night. From your experience running this track the last four years, why does it seem to race so well when we've had the opportunity from delays and maybe some practices, why does it race so well, and what are you most looking forward to running at nighttime on Sunday?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think it raced incredibly well last year - better than I thought in some ways. Especially how hot it was, whatnot.



We're always crying for a nighttime race. I think it's really cool we're doing it this year. It's going to be great for what the cars look like, how the track races, as you said.

I don't know. I think we can get that second groove working really well. High line practice, the track takes the grip really well, too. Yeah, seemed to sort of make it work.

It's a credit to Firestone, INDYCAR and the choices they make in terms of the aerodynamics and whatnot. Four or five years ago, it wasn't quite like that. Definitely been improvements from the sporting side, but also us as drivers getting up there in the high line practice, doing it properly, clearing that second lane up.

I think the key to any oval is getting that second lane working for us. That's been an ideal thing the last few years.

Q. What is the added difficulty on what's already a little bit of a condensed weekend, along with the fact that you won't be practicing or even qualifying at the time of day you'll be racing? What is that process like trying to make adjustments both mentally and with your whole team, Ben, to make sure the car is set up properly for the conditions you won't have a chance to test out on Sunday?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's certainly difficult for everyone. Everyone's in the same boat in that regard. I guess now, my fifth year in the series, leaning back on past experiences here is ideal on what that feels like. Yeah, it's going to be pretty new.

Ultimately the sun is going to be out for a little while, then it will eventually get cool. You have to really think about what your car feels like on the first run, the first half of the race, but the back half of the race is where the money's made.

I anticipate there's going to be, like, a breakout the first half of the race. You have guys up there the cars are really good. The sun goes down, lights come on, you'll have guys that had their car set up for that moment, and hopefully we're on the back end of that and make it work.

Q. Have you had a chance or have any desire to talk to Tony to clear things up at all?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We spoke, so yeah.

Q. The fact that we don't really have many night races, if any, these days, how much does that play into your timetable in terms of what you do during the day?

More time in the morning. Is it difficult to pace yourself knowing you have to do things later in the day?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm a bit of a night owl myself. Doesn't really bother me, the time difference. For sure it's probably more, like, when I have dinner or whatnot. It's the same thing when the races are at 12, 12:30 in the afternoon. It's a bit of an awkward spot so you figure out where you're going to eat. That's probably my biggest thing is getting around that part.

Yeah, no, main thing is getting your stomach and all that stuff acclimatized, make sure you have enough energy. Honestly, when you're in the car, it sort of feels pretty good. I honestly like running at night, too.

Q. Do you enjoy racing at nighttime? As a driver, do you enjoy driving at night?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I mean, I always have. I feel like when we raced Supercars at night, as well. I for sure enjoy it. I haven't had a huge amount of experience I guess you could say nighttime. Only time has been, like, Iowa and a few others.

Yeah, I'm very excited to run at night. The cars look great, as I said. It always feels faster as a driver. You have your clear visor on. It's fun.

Q. Will you have Simon onboard? Simon has had great races at this track as well as you. Is there an intention to bring Simon back for this one or was it just for the 500?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, I mean, that was for the month of May. I'm talking to him all the time. We caught up actually last week about not just that, just everything.

Yeah, he's always keeping a keen eye, will give me tips along the way.

Q. I know Palou has dominated this season. His success is at Penske's expense. None of you have won a race this year. Palou is doing something so right and so good. Are there things Penske needs to be doing better to get one of you in Victory Lane?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I mean, depends how you look at it. I feel there's definitely things I could have done better as well. All three of us could have done better.

Palou is on a hot streak, for sure. He's got the momentum. Momentum is a real thing. I personally think the start of my year prior to Indy was pretty strong, one of my



strongest. Just one guy had won four out of five races at that point. He's done it again.

I guess you can't dwell too much on the fact we haven't won a race yet. We go to strong tracks. I think we showed really good pace. Just haven't put it together. A little bit of luck, a little bit of making mistakes, bits and pieces. There's a lot of things going on.

I felt like we've been there or thereabouts pace-wise. We just haven't quite executed. That's on us. We'll work hard. I've said it before, like with Alex, he's on a run right now. You have to respect it. You've got to look at him and figure out where you can be better. Yeah, we're working pretty hard to do that.

Q. You said you've spoken to T.K. I'm taking it you're not going to disclose what was said. Where did this beef start? You had some last year publicly. Is there animosity between you two?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. I mean, me and T.K. are completely fine. I didn't go into it. I just didn't want to. Like, I mean, we can.

We cleared the air. There was nothing to really clear. It's like he clapped back, and I clapped back. It's just how it is. I thought it was funny that he posted during the race. I, like, responded. I didn't think he was going to respond the next time, but he did.

Me and T.K. have always sort of talked on the social media. Have been completely fine. It's not like a year-long feud or things like that that I've seen around.

It's just one of those deals where, like, someone's going to call me out, I'll clap back as well. It's just who I am. I'm not going to change.

Yeah, it's all good. It won't affect anything moving forward, at least from my end. We talked and it was all good.

Q. His clap back was a little personal. Did that sting at all?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Like I said, I was surprised that he did. Yeah, it is what it is. That was his decision.

Q. For us in New Zealand, our hearts were breaking for you watching the Indy 500. Can you take us back to how tough mentally that was for you.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I mean, that whole month was pretty tough. It started really well. It ended in a couple bad ways, my crash before that, then crash in

another brand new car.

Yeah, it was one of, if not the lowest points of my career. But it's something that I'll learn from. I still am a little bit perplexed about what happened in that scenario and how it did. Never sort of done that before in my career.

Yeah, it was tough. The champions are made learning from their mistakes. I truly believe we had a really fast car. I feel really strong on ovals. There's nothing to be I guess upset about apart from the fact that I felt like I sort of wasted a really good opportunity just from a pace perspective.

Yeah, look, you live and learn. Sun always rises. You just got to get on with it. The best thing for me the week after that was getting back in the race car and felt really good, even if it wasn't the most ideal result either.

Like I said, I think we've got really good pace, got good momentum. We just need to keep going.

Q. We've seen you bounce back heaps of times before. What motivates you especially in INDYCAR this season?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I just want to be better. I just want to be the best, if I can. I work really hard on my trade to be strong mentally, physically. I have been driving really, really well. Just luck and a couple of mistakes on my side that it hasn't worked out.

Most important thing for me is to learn from all these things and hopefully be stronger on the back end.

Q. You were presented an All Blacks jersey. Can you tell us about that moment? Can you share what that meant to you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's full circle because Gallagher Insurance actually sponsor me here in America and have done the last few years. They're now an associate of the All Blacks. That's the national rugby team. A team I follow really closely. They're playing here in Chicago later in the year. I'm definitely going to try to catch it.

Yeah, it's crazy how it's sort of gone full circle. Now I feel like I've got more of a connection to the team, which is really cool. When Chris told me about it, that it was happening, in the 500 month, it was so exciting. Would love to try and get some of the All Blacks guys to a race and see what it's all about, and vice versa.

Q. On the Indy stuff, you say it's one of the lowest moments of your career, it was good to get back out



there. What has the process been since then for you to put that in the back of your mind?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Like I said, I think I'm still sort of figuring out, like, what happened. I have half an idea of what happened. For me, I've had plenty of low moments in my career and I've felt like I've come back pretty strong. As long as I try and turn this negative into a positive, that's the main thing. I can't just dwell on that moment.

At the time obviously I was really sad, was just very emotional about the whole thing. But now you look back at it, there's something in there, like I said, that I'll learn from and make me better in the future or whatnot. That's how you look at it. You can't look at it any other way.

If you keep dwelling on it or worry that it that every happens again, you can't. You just got to eyes forward. Like I said, sun always rises. There's a lot of people with worse dramas than I have now. I feel like I am in a really good spot, very happy, I just have to keep going.

Q. Your season to date as well, you see yourself 150 points behind Palou. What does that do to your mindset? Do you still feel you can win the championship?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: For me, my biggest goal right now is just to capitalize on some of the pace that we've had. I felt like we were really quick in Detroit. We were in a good spot before the incident. Indy I felt quick all month. Had my best result in the Indy GP for God knows how long. We've had some positive momentum. It's just putting things together, putting the pieces of the puzzle together.

I've been in this sport long enough, not just INDYCAR, but Supercars as well, sometimes you can have a fast car and you just don't put it together. It's not your year. I don't believe it is not my year yet. I certainly need to get on the train and start winning races, getting some consistency bag, at least trying to slow down Alex a little bit.

Like I said before, that guy is executing at a really high level. You've just got to try to raise yourself to that level - not only you but your team and everyone. You can't look at it like we're terrible. I personally think we've been really, really strong. Just the pieces haven't fallen right now. I've just got to keep going.

Q. A few weeks on from some of the personnel changes at the team, how have things been since then? What has that transition been like?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, obviously it's a lot for the team to take in. We're still working through things as

we speak. Ultimately I think the best thing that Penske has the depth that we have throughout the whole factory. I'm really sort of excited to just get on with it, excited for the future of the team. I'm here for a long time. I've got an avid interest for this to work and to be as strong as we were before, which I believe we certainly can with the people we've got.

Sort of sad, obviously, like I said earlier about what happened. I respect the decision. You just got to press on and work with the people that you've got. We'll be okay.

Q. I want to jump ahead to Wisconsin. Certainly the kink is one of the signature corners. What are your general impressions of it?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's a great corner. Tough corner on cold tires when you come out of the pits with full tanks. Traditionally it's easy to hold flat, but it's quick. If something goes wrong, like it did for Josef last year, you can wreck a car pretty easily.

But it's a staple of the track there. I certainly love Road America. It's definitely up there with my favorite road courses. Yeah, it's a lot of fun.

Q. You seem to be really good at finding new stuff there, like the curbing after the repave. They did in the off-season put in a product called Grasscrete at the exit of the kink, perforated concrete that the grass is supposed to grow up through so it will keep dust down but ideally won't be a runoff. Are you familiar with that product at all? Do you have any thoughts on that?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: One, my thought is that's very interesting. Two, I have no idea what that is. Also, I didn't know that was happening. That's very interesting. I'm sure I'll find out when I potentially drive out there in one of my first hot laps in practice in a couple weeks.

It sounds like it's a pretty smart thing. But time will tell. I'm sure if you had 27 INDYCAR drivers complaining about it, the track doesn't care, it's fine. They can do what they want, it's their track. We have to get around it, figure out a way to get through there the fastest.

Q. Individually you've had a lot of success at St. Louis. Penske as a whole, when you look at what they've done in INDYCAR and NASCAR, Penske has been good at this racetrack. Is there something you can point to or is it bringing fast cars to the racetrack? Is it something that St. Louis just fits with this team?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't know. I can't comment on the NASCAR stuff. It's awesome when you see them

doing really well there.

For me personally, I just feel like our cars have been really strong there in the past. I tested there in 2021. We learned a few things there. That carried my momentum through the whole time. You can't rest on your laurels here in INDYCAR. Things will change and whatnot.

Like I said, I feel confident going there. As a team, we feel confident. Just a matter of putting it all together.

Yeah, I don't know what sort of works for us. It just seems to suit our racing and suit the style of setups that we take to the short ovals.

Q. Earlier you mentioned the different corners. Do you feel like you have to sacrifice handling on one end with a tighter radius of corners as opposed to the other? Do you feel like you have to sacrifice handling at one end or is there a happy medium you can hit?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: There's a happy medium. I definitely think you need to think about both ends for sure and how you get through there, similar to 3-4 to 1-2. That's kind of why I enjoy this track so much. It's the challenge of trying to hustle a car that maybe won't suit one end, but knowing there's a lot of time in another. Then you add the hybrid stuff that we used last year, first or second time we've gone back to a track we've used the hybrid before.

Yeah, it's fun. I really do enjoy it.

Q. We have INDYCAR with FOX gaining momentum throughout the season. Yesterday I believe it was F1 releases their 2026 schedule. We see that the Canadian Grand Prix is clashing with next year's 500. Your thoughts on that? Is it frustration that it's almost like racing Christmas has gotten nicked a little bit?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I mean, for me from a racing fan in me, I'm sad because I really enjoy watching F1 in the morning, obviously racing myself, then the Charlotte race in the evening. I did that for years. It was like a challenge in Australia, New Zealand, to see who could stay up the longest during that time. That's just how it worked out. I did that since I was I can't even tell you, like 12 years old.

Yeah, INDYCAR is going to be great. I think it may make a decision for some race fans about what they want to do, whether they want to be in Indy or whatever. That's a yearly thing that always happens to people.

Yeah, I guess that day was so cool for the general motorsport fans. Yeah, they single-handedly ruined it, like I said in my tweet (smiling).

Q. Is there anything in you as a competitor that feels like it's something personal because it feels like they're bullying the situation or the sport a little bit?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That doesn't... We have amazing momentum coming off an amazing 500. We got the 110th running coming up next year. FOX is doing an incredible job with everything.

From a competitor's standpoint, I'm just excited for the next 500. It is what it is at this point. That's up to people that are paid a lot more than me to sort out.

Q. Not an easy question to ask, but I'm going to touch upon what was said earlier. Team Penske has not won a race since Portland last year, a long drought. Is it a testament to how competitive the series has come, regardless of the Alex Palou dominance?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: For sure. The series is elite right now from a competitive standpoint. Every year it just gets harder and harder and harder, especially with the more we run with this car. Everyone has got a keen idea on what they're doing setup-wise, so it really comes down to who executes the best from not only a driver's perspective but engineers and strategists, what not.

Yeah, I think we've had the pace to win races. Like I said before, we haven't put it together. We got a pole. Been qualifying pretty well. I think we've been in most of the Fast Sixes this year but a couple. We're right there, it's just a matter of putting it together.

Yeah, it is what it is at this point. You just got to try to look for more.

Q. Do you feel any extra pressure in situations like this or do you just want to keep doing what you're doing?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: You can't look at it... If you're worried about the pressure and the outside noise, you're not going to be executing right. The only thing I can execute is what I can control. Control what I can control, drive the car to the best of my ability. If that's a third, fourth, fifth, 10, if that's a win, great. That's all I can do.

Like I said before, I don't think I've executed well the last couple of races. I'm looking to Gateway this weekend to make sure I can get back on that horse and execute a really good race. What will be will be.

Q. With the last two races, the Indy 500 and the streets of Detroit being cooler races, the sun going down this



coming weekend, how is that affecting you mentally as well as any potential tire strategy choices?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think obviously Indy was super, super cold. Obviously didn't feel what that felt like in the race. I certainly felt it on the warm-up lap.

I don't know. Like I said before, it's the same for everyone. The weather is just who sort of does the best job at that point. I don't think it's going to be that cold in St. Louis. I think it's going to be mid to high 80s. I think the biggest thing we probably got to think about, that's probably in the race, if there's any pop-up thunderstorms happening or something like that because it is summer, and we're in the Midwest. Like I said before, same for everyone. You just got to do what you do.

Q. Given your fine run of ovals in the past, how well you've been doing so far with qualifying this year, how are you feeling heading into this weekend? Do you feel you have more level of expertise at ovals that gives you a leg up?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I wouldn't say a leg up. I just believe from my own personal the way I go about racing, I feel like I can get up to speed a little bit quicker. I understand what I want from the car, what I feel. That's a big thing I think on any oval, regardless of whether you've gone there before or not.

Yeah, I feel like I can really give the feedback back to the guys and girls on the team, make a pretty fast car.

Q. It's another three series weekend this weekend with F1 in Montreal and Le Mans. Are you planning on watching either of those races?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm a big motorsport fan. I watch everything. I'll be watching F1, Le Mans as much as I can. Le Mans qualifying is on on my TV downstairs, but I came up to see you guys. Just hanging out now (smiling).

Q. You have previously posted about a very popular reality TV show airing right now. Are you keeping up with Love Island USA?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yes, I am. Very much so. I am watching Love Island every night, except I haven't watched the latest one so don't give me any spoilers. One name was trending on Twitter last night and I refused to touch it.

No, I am watching trash TV at its finest.

Q. You can just take your mind off of things...

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It just keeps my wife happy (smiling).

Q. Is it a hard transition from a track like Detroit where it's tight with all the corners, to an oval track?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think as a rookie it was really hard because you're bouncing around at Detroit, you're smooth at Indy, bounce around at Detroit, then the speeds come back up at a place like Gateway. That's what's really cool about our series and why it's so diverse and whatnot.

So cool to be able to just go from what we've gone from a superspeedway to a street course to an oval, then a fast road course. That's what is so cool and what makes it super cool and special to go well in the series, you can be so good on different disciplines.

Q. With Gateway coming up next, in general on your progression on ovals in your INDYCAR career, you broke through at Iowa last season. What makes you so good at adapting to new racing disciplines coming all the way from Australian Supercars?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I enjoy driving a car fast, finding a way to do it, regardless of what it is. I mean, I've always said that I'd race a wheelbarrow if I could. I'm just a racer. I mean, I'm racing a Legends car now for no goddamn reason. I'm just doing it because it's fun. I enjoy trying to learn about different disciplines.

My team is fantastic in terms of who I work with. Simon obviously, Josef, Will, all my teammates that I've had since I've been here in America. Learning off them, looking at the data, working out where I can be better in the video. I'm a keen study on that stuff.

Really have enjoyed getting to grips with ovals. Like I said before, I probably prefer them now, which is a lot of fun.

Q. Regarding the excitement of this challenge, the best drivers you have this year, we've seen an incredible level of performance coming from Alex. As a team like Penske who is used to winning, for you, who always be on top in the last couple years, how exciting is a challenge like this to face an unstoppable driver like Alex?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Well, I definitely don't think anyone's unstoppable. I think when they're going through a purple patch, they're executing like they are, it's tough. Like I've said, you have to figure out where you can be better and stronger and adapt to that.



Yeah, I enjoy that challenge. I would love that person to be me at that point. But like I think everyone in the series is like that. He's on a great run. There's no stopping us from learning where we can improve and where we can be better. We have some great tracks coming up for us. Just got to keep our heads down, keep focused and learn as much as we can.

Like I said before, you can't rest on your laurels in INDYCAR. We have been a strong team in the past. We still are a strong team. Nothing has slowed down there. It's just a matter of executing, and we will.

Q. Speaking about Alex, this weekend, apart from the Canadian Formula 1 Grand Prix, there is the 24 Hours of Le Mans. There are some INDYCAR drivers who have tried Le Mans in previous years like Alex and Scott Dixon. Would you in the future like to try to go to Le Mans because you have experience in endurance races?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, absolutely. Definitely something that I would love to try at some point in my career and be a part of, if the right opportunity comes along, it works with my schedule. Ultimately, this is my job, and INDYCAR racing is the first and foremost that needs to come ahead of anything else.

If ever one day the schedule does work out again or it aligns, I'd love to be a part of it. Because I haven't been there, it's a bit more of a procedure. I need to be there a longer time to go through rookie tests and all that stuff. It makes it a little bit more complicated.

Definitely something I'd love to do in the future.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, thanks so much for doing this. Save travels.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: See you guys.

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