

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Will Power

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Will, 2026, a lot of different stuff happening for you. Talk us through how much you're looking forward to this new year.

WILL POWER: Yeah, can't wait to get in the car, get on track when everyone else is there, so really looking forward to the Sebring test coming up.

Already got to test the car, so going back to Phoenix will be really nice. Definitely had a huge list of things that we want to test when we go back there. I think we'll make a nice jump.

And yeah, just having been around the team for a few weeks, so I'm very excited. I think we've got some really good stuff.

Q. Do you want to talk about TWG AI and the partnership and how cool it is having a partner that's going to actively participate with the race team this year?

WILL POWER: Yeah, the engineers, the team -- looking at the Andretti rep here, just making sure you really know what you're talking about.

Q. Did it sound like I knew what I was talking about?

WILL POWER: She gave me a look like, this guy does not know what he's talking about. Sorry.

Yeah, no, they've been working with the engineers, so we're definitely going to utilize our relationship with them. Trying to create some good programs for the engineers to be able to understand what direction to go very quickly.

Can't go into too much detail of what that entails, but it's --

Q. Top secret stuff?

WILL POWER: It is very good stuff, yeah. It is very good stuff.



Q. The fact that you couldn't really do anything with Andretti Global until January 1st, what did you get to do? What did you do to work out, keep yourself in shape? Having been to your house, you work out all the time anyway, but how much of that purgatory time was difficult for you because you couldn't really go to the shop because you weren't part of that team anymore?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was strange. Yeah, couldn't really do anything with Andretti. Did do a commercial during that time.

You know, I guess I had everything ready to go the day that I could go there. Obviously went straight there on the 2nd, made a seat, and then went testing a few days later.

Just my normal off-season preparation, that sort of stuff, was going on fitness-wise. Spent time with the family. Yeah, it was some nice time off.

Q. I got you on the phone a couple times when you were out at Trackhouse. How much did being out there to run around help you?

WILL POWER: I just enjoy karting. I like to race karts and I really like running the shifter car. I did a race at the end of last year. Can't do one too close to the season because you don't want to get hurt.

But I've got a garage out there. I just enjoy it a lot. It's a lot of fun. I think it's probably good for your car fitness and sharpness.

Q. How important is the word patience? Do you feel like you're behind learning a new team, learning an engine manufacturer? How important is it to stay patient over the first couple of weeks with testing and then kind of a quick start to the season with three straight races?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's really difficult to understand, like, are we missing anything? Are we good or bad? We won't know that until we actually have our first race, I believe. But the end of the first race weekend you'll start to see, as you always do, okay, we need to work on this, this, this and

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this.

Until you're getting into those pressure situations where things can go wrong or in a competitive situation where you kind of see where you really stack up, it's really hard to tell, so you're just putting everything in place to execute the best you can and then start working from there.

But just doing the one test is a big deal. There's a ton of things we're doing already. That was just one test.

I know in the next two tests we'll start to be able to really push.

Q. Your thoughts on Phoenix? You're one of a few drivers that have driven there in competition back in the mid 2010s. What do you know about Phoenix? What did you learn at that test? Will we see two grooves? Should it be a good race that weekend with the double-header with NASCAR?

WILL POWER: The two grooves is down to us drivers. It simply is down to us going there. Gateway turned into the best race almost this season on an oval simply because the drivers went there. If we got the high line sessions, we got confidence to feel out what it is like up there, and doing the test, like I said, helped us a lot.

The track -- if you have a single groove, yes, you're not going to pass, simply. You're just not going to pass. Two grooves, it's going to be a great race.

Q. Talk about conversations with Colton Herta; what's that been like over the off-season?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was a good conversation with Colton. Obviously he's been in that car for a while and been around that team. Even his dad, I had good conversations with Bryan, so they kind of know kind of where improvements need to happen and so on because that's sort of all you talk about, what do you think we need to do.

But it was very handy speaking to him. Just watching his onboards, he's very good. I can tell he's very -- he really gets the most out of the car, even when it's not completely balanced. You can see that he extracts -- his actual natural ability is very strong.

Q. With all the time you spent with Penske, just looking forward right now, what is kind of the weirdest part to you of not being with that team anymore and what do you anticipate being the strangest part about it?

WILL POWER: Yeah, now that I've got to work, it's just business as normal. It hasn't -- it's not even registering the difference. You're in a team. You're trying to get the most out of the car and working closely with the engineers. You're on the Honda sim, all the same stuff. You're not really distracted by, I wonder what they're doing at Penske or it's strange.

The one thing that's difficult is I used to live right near the shop. It was easy for me to go in and see everyone at Penske. But I have a place here in Indy now, which is about the same or very close to the shop. So when I'm here, it's the same deal. It's not a big -- it feels normal.

Q. This deep into your career, where does your passion to continue racing and continue to try to still be at that highest level come from?

WILL POWER: I just love competing. I love doing this. It's really enjoyable. I've got a ton of experience. It would be a pity to stop when you're really still on top of your game. A lot of work, 20 years of work, 20 years of INDYCAR racing and still able to win races and poles. It's just very difficult to do in this series.

That's sort of why I keep going.

Q. There's kind of a younger crop of guys who specifically last year were at the top outside of Scott Dixon. What do you think about this newer or younger crop of guys that's kind of taking the top of the leaderboards more and more often?

WILL POWER: Yeah, there's a lot of quick young drivers now, and there's just more and more coming in all the time. But also equally, the teams. So many good teams now. It's not just Penske and Ganassi. You've got Andretti, you've got McLaren, you've got Rahal is getting pretty good, Carpenter is getting pretty good, Foyt has Penske stuff. Yeah, you've got some pretty serious teams now that are running well. Meyer Shank, the Ganassi stuff, they're all capable of winning.

Q. After being at Penske for so many years, how difficult was it to rewire it to where you're saying, Andretti, Andretti, Andretti, and then now Honda instead of Chevy, and everything else like that?

WILL POWER: Not that difficult. It hasn't been, like -- yeah, it's just a part of my life now. It's not like -- I will say there is some funny things, like when I walked in, they have all the driver suits hanging up for the day here at content day. The Verizon suit is the first one you see. Same suit I wore last year. Looks exactly the same. It was, oh, no, that's not me.

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Yeah, but it's pretty normal. Like I said, it's just business as normal for me. It's about competition.

Q. After being at Penske for so many years, what was the last day there like? What was the last day at the shop like, the last visit? What were the memories that you took from that?

WILL POWER: Very last time I was in there, they actually called me and said, hey, we've got something for you, why don't you come by the shop, and it was a plaque. I think it was of the Indianapolis Speedway actually and everyone on the team had signed it except Roger. Maybe he didn't get it to him.

So yeah, that was nice. That was nice. That was the last time I saw everyone together there.

The time before that was really nice, too. I think I went in to pick some stuff up, and they all came out of their offices and we just had a really nice little chat. It was good stuff.

I think that was not that long after the season. I kind of remember it was when I got back from Australia maybe. Went in there and -- yeah, it was just a great group of people, people that you've known for years. It was nice.

Q. Will, I think you only did one test so far. Was that at Phoenix?

WILL POWER: Yes.

Q. So that's a short oval. How does the car now at Andretti compare to how comfortable you would feel -- were there a lot of differences compared to the Penske car, and what was it like having the Honda power instead of Chevy?

WILL POWER: Yeah, the Honda power felt really good. I didn't have too much comparison, obviously, on the road courses. We'll understand where the strengths are once I get to run around other cars and so on.

The car, once you get rolling -- I was a little bit like what's this going to feel like, and crept up on it slowly. Ended up being pretty good. It is an INDYCAR, so it's not like you can make a car feel incredibly different. Gave us a lot of ideas and notes and so on.

I felt like the Penske car was the best on short ovals, so obviously I kind of know what that feeling is and sort of gave some good feedback on where we could go.

Actually the car was really balanced. It was also fast. I

had a Penske car to compare it to. Quite fast. Yeah, it's there. There's obviously always room for improvement. Yeah, not a big shock to the system. Not at all.

Q. You mentioned how competitive this series is, but one driver has kind of been above the rest in the last few years, Alex Palou. You're the only driver to beat him to the championship in this era. What do you have to do to beat Alex Palou? What are his strengths? What are his weaknesses? What does he do better than everybody else?

WILL POWER: His strengths, yeah. Now he's just so rounded. There's not a weakness basically. I can't see a weakness with this guy. He's very strong. Obviously Ganassi is also executing really well, pit stops and car setup and so on.

Man, he's a tough guy to beat. It's possible.

I will say I was going to put that plaque that I was talking about Roger not signing it, I was going to get him to sign it at the 24-hour, but I didn't put it on the truck. I forgot to add that.

I'm not saying he didn't just want to sign it. I'm just saying I wasn't -- I would like him to. Because I know what you guys are like. It's like, oh, it'll be a headline. So he didn't say, no, I'm not signing it. I just want to clear that up. He did not say, I'm not signing it.

The team said, you should put it on the truck and get Roger to sign it when you're at the 24 because he hadn't been at the shop. I just wanted to make sure because I can only imagine Roger calling, what's this -- I didn't even know about it. Yeah, sorry, it's the media, it's not me. Blame them. Fire me out of the series. You're out.

Q. What is your relationship like with Roger after that kind of tough period where you didn't know if you were going to drive for him, he didn't know if you were going to drive for him? What's that relationship like now between you and Roger?

WILL POWER: Man, Roger gave me a great career. They just had this situation -- he offered me a year. It wasn't like, you're not coming back. He offered me to come back.

But pretty far down the road at that point. Yeah, the relationship is good. I'll always be grateful for what he did for my career and what he's done for the sport. I was lucky to drive for that long, and I could have continued, but I wanted sort of a longer term contract, and also for myself, I wanted to know what can I do on another team.

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Yeah, tremendous respect for Roger and the whole organization. I'd definitely like to beat him but I want to beat everyone. We've got to go out and win races.

Yeah, I'll get him to sign the plaque.

Q. To follow up on my initial question, what do you need to do or what does this team need to become a championship contender with you as the driver?

WILL POWER: The team has all the ingredients. Just being around the shop, they definitely have all the ingredients. They have enough people. They have some very smart people. The group on my car is incredibly experienced.

Just looking from the outside before I got there, I was like, Penske has the best pit stops. They train a lot and obviously have a good coach and so on, so I think that would be an area that I could see a lot of focus needing to be on, which it looks like it has been anyway in the off-season.

Improvement on short ovals, road courses. I would say at Penske we needed to improve on road courses, as well.

I look at Andretti, I think their street course stuff is the best in the business. They're sort of hot and cold on the road courses, and the short ovals, which is a good thing we get a two-day test. I have a ton of experience with short oval cars and developing them through the years with Penske to get to a point where we were very dominant, so to me, we're in a very good position.

It's definitely going to be improved upon from last year. Like we're already a good team. Everything they're doing and have done, to me they'll just be better, and it will just continually get better. I can just see the list, see the list of things that are getting done there. It's only going to get better.

That's why I've said I believe the team will be the best team in the next three years.

Q. Will, you talked about the street course program. Two of the first three races are streets. Colton was on the front row of that car on every street race. You feel like you've got a million St. Pete poles. Do you feel like you can make a statement here early in the season, not just to Team Penske but to the whole field that you're still very much a championship contender?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think you're right. In the early part of the season, there are tracks that really suit that car. I expect other people would work on that in the off-season

so they'd close the gap, but we're going to close the gap in other areas, as well.

So over the whole season, I feel like we should have a championship contending car. We should. I don't see anyone standing out except Palou. You're not even looking at the team standing out. When I look at the teams they're all pretty even across the board for that front group. It was just one guy extracting the most out of his car, and it was Palou. If you took him out of the equation, it's not like the other Ganassi guys are as dominant as he is.

I think you almost need to be looking at the driving stuff more than the car stuff, honestly, like what is he doing as a driver to extract the most out of it.

Q. I know on the NASCAR side Denny Hamlin was really looking for that 60th win. You're five from 50. Now you've got that kind of multi-years ahead of you. Do you feel 50 is reachable?

WILL POWER: That's the goal, yeah. To get to 50 would be very nice. That is possible, too. Get three wins this year or four, you have a really good year, you're right there.

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