

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, February 28, 2026

## Scott McLaughlin

Post-Qualifying Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by Scott McLaughlin, the driver of the No. 3 DEX Team Penske Chevrolet with back-to-back NTT P1 awards here on the Streets of St. Pete, his third all-told here in St. Petersburg, 12th career pole in his INDYCAR Series history.

Congratulations. Something about this track, eh?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yep. Maybe I need to move to Florida. I don't know what it is. I love this place. Great way to start our year.

We did this last year, and I proceeded to have the worst year of my life. I'm just focused on execution tomorrow and the rest of the season. This is one little step. Just really proud of the execution because I felt like we nearly actually missed Q1. We were right on the buffer there, and the car was terrible. It was nice to tune it up and get it right and then it become one of my favorite cars I've had around here.

It's a testament to Raul and the camaraderie that we've built already and the understanding for each other, and that can only grow from here.

**Q. What kind of adjustments did you make?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We were firing springs in the thing and front wing changes and everything. We threw the kitchen sink at it between Q1 and Q2, made it a little bit better through Q2, scraped into the Fast Six, and then it was just a matter of executing for the Fast Six and have some fun with house money we like to call it, so it was fun.

**Q. Scott, I wanted to go back to the practice in the morning. We had this heavy rain yesterday night. Did you feel any big difference when you had practice in the morning with the grip level?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, grip level was definitely lower, lower than what we tend to expect here Friday to Saturday morning. So that was a challenge in itself.

But I was very happy with my car on Friday. It's handy when you come to a street circuit and you've had a decent P1, and that sort of gave me a little bit of confidence heading into qualifying that we knew where we wanted to be. We obviously missed the window when qualifying started, but we knew where to tune or had an idea where to tune to for Q2.

**Q. I hope this will not happen, but everything can be possible with the weather. Did you have a conversation with your team about having a rain race tomorrow?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: If it rains, it's the same for everyone. I love the rain. I'm from New Zealand, and it rains half the time there. I think it's something that I've grown up with. I've always looked at it, like I said, it's the same for everyone.

You've just got to go out there and try and tune the car to the best of your ability and drive it as fast as you can.

**Q. Yesterday when we were doing the media bullpen you had talked about execution, like everything is all about execution. You keep saying that word today. I'm curious how you reel yourself in because we know you can get pretty excited in the car. How do you reel yourself in or how do you feel that and know you've got to tame it back to execute?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I know I'm 32, but I guess you could say it's maturity a little bit, INDYCAR maturity, knowing how long the season is. One sort of pole -- it's quite easy to be 20th next week at Phoenix. It's INDYCAR racing.

Enjoy the highs, but work hard because it's so close that people are going to be coming for us tomorrow, and we know how good the 10 car has been and how good everyone else has been for so many years.

For me, I'm just going out there, I'm trying to enjoy driving the car like a little kid again, just doing what I love and telling Raul what I want from the car and what will make me go faster, and we're doing that.



I didn't feel good at Q1. I said, I need this, this and this to go faster. He gave me it, and it was about sort of mixing the old potion together and sending it, and it was nice.

**Q. When you have the turnover on top of the timing stand, the spotter we talked about yesterday, how reinvigorating is this to you to come out of the gate like this?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's definitely a refresh. All the guys that I lost are some of my best friends, but they've gone on to cooler things for their careers, and I can only wish them well, and now I've got guys that can do just the same job, if not better.

I felt like me and TC, it was our first qualifying session together, and I was telling him in spots to stop talking. We're sort of warming up to each other a little bit, and it was fun.

But yeah, there's still a lot of -- I think there's a lot of things that we can work on as a group together, but this is a great start.

**Q. Speaking of TC, do you get excited when you think of the prospect of the race because that's a guy who's been a master here at coming up with the right strategy to keep you up front, so when you think of possibilities of tomorrow, how excited do you get?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I'm excited because we've got a great car. I think it's nice to have a guy that you know that's got the history of choosing the right calls and whatnot, but I've also had plenty of those guys on my stand before and won here with Kyle Moyer, who was unreal in that department, too.

The first thing you need is car speed, and for me to make the right moves at the right time, no mistakes, and hopefully we can have a day like we did in 2022.

**Q. I know you're focused on your effort, but to throw a bouquet at Dale Coyne Racing, I don't know if anybody expected the rookie Dennis Hauger to be third and Grosjean in his first race back to be in the Fast Six, so how impressed are you by what they did?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was very impressed. This is INDYCAR. It's competitive. That's what makes the sport so awesome is the fact that a lower budget team, whatever you want to call it - I'm sure they don't like me saying that - but at the end of the day it's well known, and they're killing it. That was a great effort. I was certainly surprised to see both of them in the Fast Six, but they've made some

acquisitions over the off-season and got a couple guys that have been pretty deeply entrenched into the sport, as we all know, and been okay.

**Q. Curious about the progress you feel Team Penske has made on its street course package, especially with three before the 500 and one directly after?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm skeptical to go, yeah, we've found -- I think for me, it's going to be waiting until Long Beach. Long Beach was our worst street circuit, I thought personally and I think as a team and probably the biggest gap we had to the Andrettis and maybe the Hondas in some ways.

This is nice, but we know we're fast here. It's just a matter of executing -- sorry I keep using that word but you're going to get used to it. Yeah, I'm not counting my chickens before they hatch. It's okay right now.

**Q. How much of a point of emphasis was the street course package over the off-season?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The whole package was, yeah. We need to be better.

**Q. Before you'd been on the track, you mentioned that you expected the tire deg to be similar to the 2024 race. Now that you've been on both compounds, is that your opinion still?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm not sure. I don't think so. Yeah, I think it's going to be worse than we think. But I think it's going to be good enough that you have to run on them long enough, but I think there is a cliff there. But we'll find out tomorrow morning.

**Q. How much is that going to change the race, to have to run on two sets of the alternates?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, you have to be good on both compounds. Thankfully my car has been pretty similar balance-wise on both compounds. I don't know on tire deg, but I know certainly when I go out on used reds that it's certainly a loss, in some ways, but I think we can make do with it.

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