

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, March 1, 2026

**Scott McLaughlin**

**Christian Lundgaard**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up this year's Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg. Alex Palou, the champion, will be joining us shortly, as will Christian Lundgaard, who finished third today.

Joining us right now Scott McLaughlin who led 34 of the 100 laps driving, of course, the No. 3 DEX Team Penske Chevrolet with the second podium here on the Streets of St. Petersburg, Florida. 22nd career podium. Kind of a crazy race, tire strategies and what not. A better result for you this year than last year. A good start for 2026 for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, absolutely. Obviously you want to be top step. I think that was a solid day for us. I think we maximized our strategy. I think it was going to go one way or the other with tires.

I maybe thought the black tire could have probably performed a little bit better in that first stint, but yeah, my car just didn't probably turn that tire on well enough. Wanted to pull a gap, but I was also trying to save fuel and make it a two-stop in some ways.

Yeah, it was a difficult first stint, and then I sort of got stuck behind the Andretti guys when they were losing their tires. I thought our car was really good. Just probably was a little bit hidden today just where it was position on track, but that's okay.

Like I said, I think we maximized our day. No mistakes. Pit road was great. Yeah, just good start.

THE MODERATOR: The 27 was also saving fuel. It was frustrating when you're sitting back there, right, behind those guys?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, and I knew I had a window to pass him before my tires went as well, and I think I just got him maybe like a lap before my tires went. Then I was sort of hanging on in front of CL.

Yeah, anyway, it was a good day overall, and I felt really good. My driving was good, and it was, yeah, solid execution.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the start to 2026. Also joined now by Christian Lundgaard, who led a lap today. Comes home third, driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet. Best ever finish here on the Streets of St. Petersburg and tied the race high with ten on-track passes in that race.

Christian, your thoughts? Podium, good way to start 2026.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, I didn't know I led a lap, so that's a bonus, I guess.

THE MODERATOR: Literally. By a point, yeah.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: No, it was a good race. I think we just very clearly just missed it in qualifying yesterday. We made some changes after P2 that just simply didn't work.

Got out of the car. Obviously didn't transfer from Q2 and wasn't necessarily that upset, because I knew exactly where we had gone wrong. It was just undo that, and I think the car just came alive like we expected it to today.

Again, you have to do the job out there, and I thought it was a very exciting way to start out the season.

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

**Q. Despite the positives for both of you, you both sound happy with the way the car was and all that, but does it get a little frustrating --**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I knew that was coming. The Alex Palou one? Look, he's just doing a great job, put himself in the right position, Bruce.

I think that they were on the right strategy today with the tire, and that's a decision they made compared to us, but I thought we showed plenty of speed. Just, like I said, we were boxed in.



Yeah, you saw the DHL car. He knew where he qualified. He was going to be there or thereabouts. I knew when he was the third the first stint, that I was like, okay, well, he's probably going to be the guy throughout the race, and it ended up he was.

**Q. Christian.**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, every time I'm on the podium, second or third, he's first. It's pretty annoying (smiling).

**Q. Also, Scott, new race strategist. Do you think you're going to keep him?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, he's not bad for a rookie.

**Q. I guess to follow up on that, I'll go to you specifically, Scott, when you say Palou was putting himself in the right position, what has he done in all these races to put himself in that position where he ends this race 12 seconds ahead?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: He uses car pace and gets track position. Obviously I think the correct decision today was probably to start on red tires, but we didn't know that going in. It was sort of our gut feel and where we wanted to go, and we decided to go blacks. We didn't have the pace on them, and he managed to.

Like I said, I think I was stuck behind Marcus for a bit, lost some time, and then when I came out, Kyle just jumped me in the pits.

Yeah, he won by 12 seconds or whatever, but I think I could have narrowed that gap down pretty well with the way that my car was handling.

**Q. Then for both of you, the pass you made near the end to be on the podium and to be second and third on the podium, what did you see there to get past Kirkwood and where he was?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: He was dying.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah. I mean, we got around him at the same time, so I think -- yeah, and then left him.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

**Q. Scott, yesterday you mentioned, you know, you qualified well here last year, but didn't. Now you qualified well and finished well. How do you see this as jump-starting the season for you?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think we've had a really good run the last, you know, even looking back at the end of last season. I thought we found our mojo a little bit and then this weekend as well.

Knew this was going to be a strong track, and I had to make the most of it. But, yeah, no, I think it was solid from my side.

Yeah, TC is new to me, but that felt like he fit in like a glove for me, like I've known him for so long. That was so good. Then Raul and me, I think we just missed the balance a little bit, probably being a little bit cautious and not trying to throw away a good car, but it was still decent.

I just think it was a really solid day for us on the 3 car.

**Q. Did anything you learned today, is that going to transfer to Phoenix next week?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Not Phoenix, but maybe Dallas.

**Q. Scott, talking about Raul, looks like the two of you are off to a fast start despite this being race one for you. Tell me about that relationship-building, and also you mentioned TC, rookie, ha ha, but this is really the first weekend of just being a strategist. Tell me about that and how your weekend has gone?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Firstly, with TC, he just made me look at the race from a completely different perspective. Not that my guys before me haven't done that. I've really enjoyed working with Kyle, who is now on Christian's stand, and Ben before that.

But, you know, I think just the confidence I have in TC in terms of what he's done in the past and to make the right calls at the right time is huge. It makes my focus more on driving, and that's just a big thing.

Raul is the same sort of thing. I've known Raul since I got here, but even a little bit before when I was in supercars and always been friendly. That was a similar relationship to what I had with Ben beforehand.

There's still some growing there for him. He's sort of fresh off the IMSA, Porsche program and sort of learning these cars a bit more. I think the last time he worked on an INDYCAR was 2015. So learning a little bit more.

I think his big test is going to be Phoenix. I think having the confidence to go there and put the right front wing in at the right time for qualifying and all that stuff, there is a lot of trust there on both sides, and that's a good thing to start

with already in race one.

**Q. Christian, last year eighth place here. Had a really strong start to the season. Tell me, year two starting off for you with this program, new strategist but same race engineer, but does this feel like an even better momentum coming out of 2025 for you?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I feel like we very much left where we picked off in Nashville last year. I think next week will be very interesting for us with obviously Moyer on the stand, which feels very funny now sitting next to Scottie here.

But I think ultimately we knew the car was fast this weekend. We knew it was fast here last year. We simply just made a mistake in qualifying, and we made up for it in the race, but to go out there and put the results on a paper feels nice now.

It wasn't really what I expected waking up this morning. It was what I hoped for. That was the mentality last year. It was just be competitive, knocking on the door, and the results will come. I think that was showcased today as well.

**Q. You and Pato running together quite a bit. Had some movement you had to make for it in the field. Tell me about that. You two seemed to be respectful, but also fought pretty damn hard.**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I think I was behind him for a good 20 laps when I started getting annoyed of seeing the back of his car. Then once the pit sequence started, some of the three-stoppers were holding us up at that point, and I got around him, which was around the Ericsson part.

Ericsson fought hard to try to keep that position. I had to fight to get by him. I had to be very aggressive to get by him, which was very nice. It gave me some clean air to catch up to Scottie at that point, but ultimately, I think our cars are good, and I think we will be in the hunt this year.

**Q. For either of you, definitely Marcus was racing hard at times. I just wondered if you were surprised at the way the race played out with people's driving or anything like that, or would you say it was just kind of what you expect at St. Pete?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: From my end, pretty standard, and the guys that I was racing, I have raced probably four or five days today, and they're the guys that I have raced with in the past and very fair, very clean and hard. Yes, it's what you sort of expect.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I agree, yeah.

**Q. Apologies if this has already been asked, but just kind of wanted to talk about the importance of tire management in modern street course racing. I know that Alex seems to do it the best, but maybe talk about how that has changed over the past couple of years.**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, it's hard to really explain, because the tires are different. The tires are different this year. I think we learned pretty early in the weekend that it was similar tires to 2024, so you already have an idea of how the race is going to play out, which I think is why everybody was on a two-stop, at the end of the day. Not like last year.

I think we'll see when we get to Texas.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I agree. Right now it's pretty raw and fresh until we do a debrief and think about what these tires look like and stuff. All I can say is I probably wish I started on the reds, because my car felt better on the reds, but that's all hindsight.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the start of the season, and we'll see you in a couple of days at Phoenix Raceway.

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