

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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**Alex Palou**

**Will Power**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up today's Java House Grand Prix of Arlington. Our second-place finishing driver is here, Alex Palou. His second podium of 2026. Clearly a big bounce-back after last Saturday. 46th career podium in his 102nd career start.

ALEX PALOU: 101.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Big points day for you, which at the end of the day will matter at the end of the season.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I tried hard, man. Kirkwood was really fast. I could see already on second and third stint that I was pushing as much as I could, using OT to try to get gaps. He was closing 3, 4/10ths on me. I was like, Oh, man, it's going to be tough.

Yeah, he just passed me incredibly. It was a very awesome overtake. Should have obviously defended a little bit better. It's very easy to say now.

Yeah, honestly didn't really have much for him. I think I'm really happy getting on the podium and trying to steal a little bit of Andretti's party this weekend. Yeah, right? Will was incredible on those alternates as well, making them last. They told me he had to do 12 laps more. I was like, In two laps he's just going to die.

Very impressive.

THE MODERATOR: What did you see on the pass there from Kyle?

ALEX PALOU: I defended in turn 10. They were a little bit more trimmed than us. We knew that. They were catching us a lot on the straights. That was a decision we took. That's the best we knew.

Then out of turn 12, I went on the OT, on the hybrid as well. He was very close. I didn't know if I had to defend or

not. He just lunged. It was a clean pass.

THE MODERATOR: Will, congratulations. First podium of 2026. Led 16 laps today. 109 career podiums now. Your thoughts on a podium?

WILL POWER: Yeah, very nice. Honestly, I just wanted to have a clean weekend after the first two. Obviously last week we had a shot at the win or at least a podium. It's very nice to get one today.

Very happy with the new team. Very, very strong. Very strong. Still improving a lot, too. I think this will be the team to beat this year actually. I was saying three years it would take us to get everything, but I'm going to say this year (smiling). It's good stuff.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

**Q. Alex, what does a revived and rejuvenated Andretti Global for what's already a pretty competitive INDYCAR SERIES?**

ALEX PALOU: I mean, I think already last couple years they've been really, really strong. Especially last year. If you look at Kyle's results, Colton's as well, they were both really, really strong. Had couple of issues on strategies, incidents or pit stops.

You could know that the pace was right there. If you add in Will, probably the knowledge that he has from so many years, how he has done things, I think you can improve the team. There you go. They've been really, really fast, really strong on all those three races that we've done so far.

Yeah, it's tough. It's not easy. Like, I was pushing as much as I could today. There was nothing on the car. I was not having any handling issues. Normally you cannot drive because you cannot brake or something. I was just flat out. I was happy with my car. Just they were a little bit happier than us.

**Q. Will, on one of your pit stops, you had to hit the brakes because Louis Foster blocked you. Did that hamper your chances of winning the race?**



WILL POWER: No, no, no, no. I couldn't have kept these guys behind me with the fuel that I had to save. We kind of committed to the two-stopper. That was a big fuel save.

First two stints were big tire saves. But the pace was not bad. It just wasn't the quickest strategy today. But it showed that we can really look after tires if we have to and we can get big fuel.

Podium this weekend, I was going to be very happy with. Just wanted to get a solid run in, then get my feet on the ground, see what we can do.

**Q. Rarely do we go to a first-year street race where everything goes awesome. As impressive as the track, the facility is, how excited are you to know this is the start of something big?**

WILL POWER: It's a new standard. Every stand was full, like, when you're driving around.

ALEX PALOU: Very impressive.

WILL POWER: It was totally, totally full. The track looked amazing. It just looked like a big event. This is setting a new standard of what our events should look like.

I can't thank I think it's Penske Entertainment, the Cowboys, the Rangers, right, the whole group is just amazing.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, incredible. As Will said, already I would say on Friday it felt like a big, big event. You can see the facility. You can see how the track was built. You can see we have a long street track, which is what we've been pushing for. It's been a 10 out of 10. There's nothing you can say that this was bad.

The attendance was incredible. The fans were incredible. They stayed until the end, like when we were just pitting in now after a full-course yellow. Everybody was just there being happy. Yeah, it's incredible to be part of this.

THE MODERATOR: You were in the cars, but during the race it was announced it was a grandstand sell-out.

ALEX PALOU: Looked like.

**Q. Will, you said it was nice to have a clean weekend. Did you already forget about the contact with Dixon or is that a little bit of contact...**

WILL POWER: Honestly, I never even thought about it. Didn't think about it after. It was such a small incident. It

wasn't anything, no.

I felt bad for Scott. Lost time and so on. Yeah, no, that never entered my mind, that one.

**Q. Alex, what did you think about the decision to accelerate the caution and try to finish this race under green? Did you think you had a chance of making it, advancing or losing your position?**

ALEX PALOU: I thought it was good to try and get a green start again. I was going to try it. Honestly, I don't think I had the pace to try and go for Kyle. I was more worried about the 26 than the 27.

Yeah, I thought it was a great decision. At the same time I knew I was probably going to be fighting with Will more than with Kyle.

**Q. Will, what did you think about trying to finish the race under green instead of running it out under caution?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, no, I was excited about the restart. I definitely wasn't going to do anything risky. I was going to really try to finish where I was. Obviously if Alex made a mistake or something, or Alex and Kirkwood got into it, I would have been very happy just finishing where I was considering the beginning of the year, so...

Yeah, I will say the Andretti cars are very good on restarts. That's something I noticed.

**Q. Will, you've talked repeatedly about the potential you feel this Andretti team has. What's it like to see it come to fruition with the 1, 3 and 4 finishes?**

WILL POWER: It's kind of what I expected. The weakness of the team was short ovals. I had one of my best short oval cars ever at Phoenix. We know now we're very strong on short ovals.

Looking forward to Barber. I think we can have some good stuff there. Yeah, the thing is with this team, we've got so much room to improve. I know we do. Some of the stuff... Got an amazing team already, for example, being really good on short ovals now. That was something where last year they would just take what they could get and hope for the best on street courses where they're strong. Now we're going to be fighting for wins on short ovals.

**Q. Three different teams in Victory Lane to start the year off. What does that say about the balance of the series right now?**

ALEX PALOU: I think last year it was just something out of the norm that we had. I think some people struggled. I think Penske struggled quite a lot, maybe not taking wins until the last race of the season, made that look a lot for the 10 car and CGR. It's always been this competitive. It's not that suddenly it's more competitive.

I don't know what you think.

WILL POWER: The series is very tough.

ALEX PALOU: Incredible.

WILL POWER: I felt like I did a perfect race today. It was not the perfect strategy, obviously. I'm third. I always thought at Penske anytime we did our job, we'd end up close to the podium. I feel the same in this team now.

Yeah, it's an incredibly tough series. Very tough. Good stuff. You got to be very versatile. Very hard to win on all disciplines.

**Q. Will, we've seen young drivers come in this series and win a few races. With what Kyle showed, what he's shown, what kind of driver is Kyle Kirkwood?**

WILL POWER: He did does his homework. He's the real deal, man. From go-karting all the way up, he's won every single championship.

This guy is very good. Very good. Incredible. He doesn't do it just through natural ability. He works hard. He's a very good teammate. This guy's a lot for me to learn off of. Very impressive, yeah.

I think he'll be tough to beat this year in the championship. I really do. He definitely is the full package.

**Q. Alex, at one point after the pit cycle, you assumed the race lead, you eventually built a gap on Kirkwood by about seven seconds. Did you never feel you were in control of the race?**

ALEX PALOU: No, because I was fighting with Will on the other strategy. It was getting tough. Like, normally when you have someone on a two-stopper and you're on a three-stopper, you catch him easily. He was matching the pace that I had. He obviously just had less fuel and had to pit a little bit earlier.

Yeah, I thought at first I needed to fight with the 26. I saw that Kirkwood was just closing on us. I said, All right, maybe on clean air we'll be able to match him or pull a gap. He was getting half a second closer, 6/10ths closer. I thought it was going to take him a little bit longer to get

through us. I think also they were very trimmed, all the Andrettis. We were not. It was just making it a huge difference for them on the straights. It's a decision we took. I was better on all the corners, but I couldn't really use it as much as what they were gaining on me.

Yeah, I never felt safe this race, never.

**Q. Obviously first time that you guys are driving on this track, but also the first time a lot of people are getting to see this type of series. I've seen a lot of people carry your name on their back. How does it feel for you to be the first to get to experience this but having that kind of interest from the fans?**

ALEX PALOU: Incredible. I was saying my expectations for this event were super high because of all the people that is involved on making it. Obviously I saw all the ideas that they have, all the renderings and stuff. I think that's very easy to do.

My expectations were high, but this has exceeded by 10 times, this event in general. Since Friday when we showed up here, how the track was built... Obviously, there's always stuff you can improve. There's bumps you can avoid having, improve year by year. By far this is the best street course race I've been a part of. It's really fun to see so many people on the stands. The energy was incredible. I cannot wait to be back here next year.

**Q. We're entering a break in the INDYCAR SERIES season. What is one thing you're proud of during this triple race and one thing you would work on during this break?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, proud to have a podium this weekend. Pretty proud of our performance on the short oval. But definitely need to work on finishing without incidents (laughter).

Yeah, no, I'll be glad for a rest, to be honest. Been going hard. I've never been so busy in my life. Moving to a new team. I have to get a place in a new city, so on and so on. So much to do. It will be nice to sort of catch our breath, come out swinging when we come back.

ALEX PALOU: I think it's been a really, really good first start of the season. Obviously what happened in Phoenix, still we got a win and a second. I think from a series standpoint, it's been incredible to see what everybody's been pushing on. Hey, we don't need breaks after once we start. I think you can see it on the ratings, on how engaged everybody is. I think that's a big gain.

Then fortunately I'm not resting next week, I have Sebring.

I'll be very busy. I have sim on Wednesday, traveling on Thursday, then on back. There's a lot of stuff I can always learn as well. I'm excited. I love it when I'm busy like that.

Yeah, cannot wait for Barber.

He's talking about the onboard camera.

WILL POWER: I've never seen a championship leader all last year not get the onboard.

ALEX PALOU: I think only 2021 I had it.

WILL POWER: Very strange (laughter).

ALEX PALOU: We can put the money together to put it my car.

WILL POWER: Many times when I was leading the championship, I always had the onboard. I think we're going to all vote for you to have the onboard. What's going on in there?

ALEX PALOU: I'm down. Obviously we're trying to hide stuff (laughter). But anytime.

WILL POWER: We'll talk to INDYCAR. I can organize it. Give me permission.

ALEX PALOU: I'll start hiding some other stuff then.

WILL POWER: I just want to see how you drive. I'm very interested. Very interested (laughter).

**Q. Alex, can you talk about going into the race, setup decisions, downforce, try and keep the tires under you and happy, versus straight-line speed. It looked like Kirkwood had a straight-line advantage and was able to keep his tires alive with less downforce. Did that play into the end of the race?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we did the best we could for our car and for my feeling with the car. That's how I was more comfortable with it. I knew that it was going to be like two different races. The tire race on the alternates, I think everybody knew it was going to be tough to get those. Then the primary race that you could go as hard as you wanted.

Yeah, unfortunately when I tried less downforce, I couldn't really get the car to the balance that I was comfortable with. Maybe if we can spend a week of testing or more practice sessions, I would be able to get it there.

With the limited time that we have nowadays, it's tough.

Yeah, we know that Andretti is running different ride heights, different stuff. They make it work. It's very impressive they can make it work on tires, on speed. Yeah, I mean, obviously it's a lot easier now once the race is done and you can see what happened. It could have been also that they would have struggled so much on tires, then you look like a superhero because you added more downforce.

Yeah, I think it keeps it fun. It's never straightforward. Next year I wouldn't have as much downforce.

**Q. Will, can you add to that? Earlier you said high deg tracks, tire deg is the next big step for Andretti to take. Made a big step in tire deg.**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, just the way I managed them in the cockpit, a lot of it was that this time. Yeah, we're definitely looking at some of the stuff like at St. Pete from Marcus and Kyle there.

But cement tracks are good for us, for sure. There's no question. But yeah, looking at everything, everything. Car's obviously very good, but you cannot rest in this series. Keep pushing hard until we're winning every race, I guess.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations on a podium finish.

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