

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Scott McLaughlin

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up practice, we're currently joined by Scott McLaughlin. The 2022 winner here at PIR.

Scott, thanks for joining us. Your thoughts on practice one and the start of the weekend here?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, hello, everyone. Solid day. I mean, good initial run that we had. The car felt pretty solid. Just was sort of tuning and learn as much as we could. Some cars tested here before, so they sort of got off the ground pretty quickly, which we expected. We sort of just went ahead with our plan.

I'm not entirely happy with the car right now, but I think we can tune it up and get it better for the rest of the weekend. Look over data tonight and hopefully we can come back with a strong car tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Former winner here. You like this place a lot. What is it about it that seems to fit your driving style?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I mean, anyplace especially you come to that you won before. I think for me, being able to go to a track that requires a little bit of technicality in terms of braking hard, hairpins. Then you have the fast flowing nature of part of the track as well. It's a challenge to set up for, a challenge to drive and get completely right. It's a small lap. Always very tight.

It's rewarding when you get it right, but it does punish you when you get it wrong. Hopefully we're on the right end of it and can make it happen. Certainly feels good.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

Q. Scott, how important, if at all, is it to have a good weekend here, because there's four straight after this one?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, positive momentum, it's a

real thing in sport. Especially in motorsport. Yeah, we're sort of looking at from the 3 car side really trying to concentrate on these five weeks as a little mini five-week championship in some ways, and try to do the best we can.

I think the last few races we've come on strong as a team, between engineering, driving, on the stand. We're chomping at the bit to get going this weekend.

Yeah, I think it's important every weekend to go well, important to get that momentum going. Hopefully, yes, we can start it this weekend.

Q. Do you think that momentum is more important for the end of this year or for when you look ahead to 2027?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't know. It's such a long off-season that it's hard. I think the biggest thing is trying to learn as much as you can with your team, prove that we can do this together and work hard.

I really feel like the last month we've worked really well as a team. Any momentum's great. Whether that carries into the off-season, to the preseason, it remains to behold.

Certainly the confidence from a really good end to the year you'll carry through the whole off-season with all your simulator work, testing, whatever. Hopefully that bodes well for the start of '27.

Q. All the engineering changes you kind of had this year, what were some of the biggest challenges initially this season? You mentioned this positive last month or so. Are there any kind of specifics that you feel have maybe clicked with this kind of revamped group in these past few months?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, my stand is fantastic. My engineering group is fantastic. I was so confident with them heading into the year. It's just one of those things that you've got to gel regardless. You have all these different tracks. It's so tough in INDYCAR to be great week in, week out.



For Raul, my engineer, he's been in sports car for a long time. Hadn't been in INDYCAR a long time full-time, although he's done the odd Indy 500 here and there.

Going to Barber, going to a street track, going to a short oval, trying to keep that cadence right and getting the balance right, nailing that in a series that's so tight as INDYCAR, it's difficult.

It just took a little bit more time for me maybe to get my terminology about what I wanted with the car and to make it better to him. I think the way he was taking some of my comments maybe was like a little maybe he thought I wanted too much, and he was changing the car a lot. Then I didn't want it that much. Just trying to manufacture that language that we can both get on top of a few things.

I thought the testing we've done was really great. Milwaukee and Mid-Ohio we had some really good tests. The races since Indy, I feel like we've all clicked really well.

I'm excited to keep building with this group. Have so much confidence and we'll keep working.

THE MODERATOR: Will Power also joins us. Three-time winner here in Portland, including the last two.

Will, your initial thoughts about practice as you head into what's going to be a busy weekend.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was a strange, strange session because it actually got slower on a quicker tire. I think what happens is the INDY NXT rubber gets taken off as you go along. The INDY NXT rubber is quite soft and good. So yeah, it's sort of hard to truly know where we stack up.

We certainly were not where we needed to be on the hard compound. We were way off. Definitely have to think about it tonight and see what we need to do to get closer to the mark.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Scott, I look at your teammate David Malukas being 83 points behind Palou in the championship. You've been in those championship fights before. What kind of collective effort do y'all try to make to help prop him up for this closing stretch? What kind of advice do you give David since he's never been in a situation like this before?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Firstly, one race at a time for everybody. Just take it as it comes, especially in this series these days, how competitive it is.

From a team perspective, yeah, for sure, we want a Penske car to win, regardless if it's myself, Malukas or Josef. We're going to be working hard as a team to make that happen. We'll figure that out as time goes on. That's always been the mantra here.

Yeah, for him, different championship cars throughout the years in different categories. It's about trying not to really focus on the points, just worry about execution, the rest will take care of itself.

But it's hard to beat experience in that spot. He'll just gain it this year and continued to get better.

Q. Could you see a situation with you and Josef where maybe as a team y'all try to cover a certain way, do strategy a little bit different to try to shake stuff up and take points off Palou to aid David?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think we always try to make sure a Penske car wins. We always cover all bases. I think you saw that in Nashville. We pitted early. The other guys stayed out. A few other things happened there. You try and cover all the bases to make sure we can at least get one car in front of the 10 or something like that.

We just take that as circumstantial, and that will be decided between the strategists really more than the drivers.

Q. Looking at the six races in the next five weeks, we know there's a lot of scenarios that come into play. For you as a driver, how hard does this get in terms of your recovery between events, different type of tracks, all those scenarios? That has to put a lot of demand on the back end of the season for you as a driver physically.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I was speaking to Will about it. I'm so excited. I think five weeks straight is awesome. It's tough for the teams. It's tough for us overall as a category. But it's awesome to be racing that much. Part and parcel of our calendar being from March to September and being so tight-knit together.

I'm looking forward to it personally. Yeah, it is tough recovery-wise. Maybe your gym sessions are a little bit less than usual I guess in some ways. It's nice to be in the seat all the time. Just getting match fit, track fit you could say, being in the race a lot.

Q. Within the series of weeks, you have two brand-new tracks that no one has been to before. That will make a little bit more of a level playing field for everyone.



SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I mean, everyone has seen the track. They'll get some simulator running. For sure, it's try to hit the ground running as hard as you can.

We know the Andretti boys are strong on street circuits. DC and Markham, two amazing events we're going to. I'm really excited. It's going to be great.

Try to hit the ground running, but know that the normal guys will be up front and hopefully we can stay with them.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, we'll cut you loose.

We'll continue with questions for Will Power.

Q. Will, this was actually one of the first tracks you ever raced in when you came up to the States. Does it hold a special meaning to you returning again?

WILL POWER: I mean, it is funny, I've been quite successful here. It's a track I certainly enjoy. I do like the area.

I never have a favorite track. I like them all. They all have their own special technique that is required to do well and be fast.

But here, yeah, first time, first track I ever drove in the U.S., and first time I drove an INDYCAR was here. Obviously one of those memories that lasts forever. It was very clear in your mind the first time you did that. You ask me about the last 10 races, I probably couldn't tell you. But I do remember that day, yeah (smiling).

Q. Looking at the session that happened today, didn't seem to be a lot of variance between the red and black tire. Is that something that you think will transfer through the actual race as well where maybe the two tire compounds are quite close to each other this weekend?

WILL POWER: I actually do think that will be the case because it is the same tire as Barber. That was true of Barber. I think in qualifying the red was definitely a bit quicker.

It was a bit unusual this session that Palou did a 8-5 on blacks, then went slow on reds. That's to do with INDY NXT rubber going down. Yeah, makes it hard.

As tight as the field is now, inconsistent sessions, it makes it very difficult to know exactly what to do. 2/10ths can be maybe 10 spots at times. All the details matter.

Definitely have to have a very good think about it tonight.

Q. Are you and Kyle currently doing something a little bit different? What do you feel like will have to change for you?

WILL POWER: Who are you talking about? Kyle?

Q. Yes.

WILL POWER: Definitely came here with a different car than what they had last year. I think the Mid-Ohio test we learned a lot. It is sort of applying some of that.

As the tires change, it's different every year. You can't really rely on much of what you did last year. What they had last year, they really struggled. They had to turn up with something better than that.

Yeah, when you have a teammate that's really quick, because you have a very good reference, you look at everything. I really trust what Kyle's feedback is. His feedback is very accurate. Definitely good to have a teammate like that.

Q. While you were talking about the impact of the INDY NXT rubber, tomorrow you'll have ARCA from their practice and qualifying right before your qualifying. I guess they'll race, it will be there probably before your warm-up. How much do you think that will affect things?

WILL POWER: I think it will be very interesting. I'm in the first group of qualifying, I believe, first group, yeah. So that will be I think unpredictable because sometimes the rubber can really sway the balance of the car. INDYCAR rubber doesn't mix. With Firestone, with whatever ARCA is running, that could make things interesting.

Q. Have you had to change your driving style at all switching from the Honda to Chevy power?

WILL POWER: No, not really. I mean, there's subtle differences. You can tell from the lap times, it's not like huge variance in performance. They're both very, very close.

Yeah, I think maybe the Honda engine is a bit more user-friendly. But they're very similar power, all that. Just simply both manufacturers have pushed very hard to reach out to the limit of this engine formula. There are minute differences that you're picking out that make the difference.

Q. Did you happen to look at any of the tests during the week of the new car?



WILL POWER: Yes, yes, I did. I did look at it. Looked at the car. I mean, I went and actually went and (indiscernible) the car. Didn't have its bodywork on.

I think it will be a very cool car. Very fast, very cool. They really did a good job of taking their time and understanding what is required weight distribution-wise, wheel base, gearbox, rear suspension exchange. I think it will be very nice. It's about time we had a car, a new car. I think it will be great.

Q. Marcus was obviously announced to be returning to the team for next year. I'm intrigued what the dynamic has been like between the trio of you this year, what the strengths have been of that? How important is it having that sort of chemistry?

WILL POWER: It is important. I was really happy to hear that. I just have really enjoyed this year because Kyle and Marcus are just so good to work with. It's been a great atmosphere. It would have been a pity not to continue that. So yeah, really excited that we're all together again next year.

I think we all feel like we're going to have a great year. I think we have made big gains this year in many areas, whether it's pit stops, whether it's car builds, whether it's road courses, ovals. It's all been good stuff. We've all contributed.

Yeah, it was very nice to hear that. Glad.

Q. In terms of some of those gains, specifically on road courses, what do you feel you have been able to bring to the team knowledge-wise that maybe you had from the past that the team lacked?

WILL POWER: Well, yeah, I mean, spend so many years in these cars, you have a pretty good idea of where you need to be. Every team has different philosophies. It's such a competitive environment now that it's going to be very specific for every track.

We certainly made some big changes oval-wise and road course-wise where they were running last year. It's all been good. It's just good to have someone from the outside that has been around another team for a long time. We combined our ideas together and come up with really good stuff.

Yeah, it's a great team. It really is. Really good people. A great working atmosphere actually. I find it to be very fun in the engineering office, teammates.

Q. Just from being at the track earlier, it seemed like some drivers had some issues turn one, turn two, that area. What was it about that part of the course that seemed to be a little tricky?

WILL POWER: It's the combined braking in turn one, you have to get through that dip properly. It's really hard to be accurate 'cause, I mean, seriously that turn one apex wall, you got to get as close as you can, get as close as you can, then you're braking at the same time as you're turning, go into a big dip. It is difficult to get that right.

Q. As far as yourself, you do pretty well at this track. You've won here several times. What would this mean for you if you win this weekend, 'cause it would be your first for this team?

WILL POWER: It would be a big deal. It would be crazy if it all played out like that. It would be something that, yeah, would obviously be great simply. It would be amazing. There's no other way to put it. It would be just amazing.

Q. As far as the free agency that's going on, the few rides that are left, do you still see a surprise lurking out there, somebody ending up in one of the prime cars that might not be the one that everyone thinks?

WILL POWER: Yeah, potentially, I do. Yeah, I do potentially see there could be some surprises there. We'll see what happens.

Q. You got a candidate?

WILL POWER: Just some good guys on the market. I mean, VeeKay is one of them. I think Lundgaard is one of them. Mick Schumacher is one of them. Yeah, I don't know, maybe they're looking at F2 guys.

Q. Dreyer & Reinbold hasn't picked an engine. May have a different engine than the Chevy.

WILL POWER: Yeah, they could. It's hard to say. All interesting stuff. I want to know how it plays out.

Q. Get out your crystal ball.

WILL POWER: Yeah (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Will, thanks for joining us. We'll see you tomorrow.

WILL POWER: Thank you.

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