

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, September 5, 2026

Scott McLaughlin

Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Alex Palou currently joins us, starting on the front row tomorrow. His third front-row start here at WeatherTech Raceway, Laguna Seca. 11th front-row start here in 2026.

The car looks really good.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Clearly you like this place a great deal.

ALEX PALOU: I love it.

Q. Are you disappointed not having pole position?

ALEX PALOU: Yes and no. When it's that close, the car was so good, I think we could have got it when you're that close. When it's two, one-and-a-half 10ths, three, it's not my day. When it's that close... I think Scott and his team, they did a better job.

Yeah, it kind of hurts a little bit, but at the same time it's so cool that we're starting the front row tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Does that give you the edge you need to come home with another win, make it three in a row?

ALEX PALOU: For sure. I don't think it matters too much. You'll see tomorrow. It will be an overtaking fest. I think the tire deg is really high, which is great. It's incredible.

What this tarmac is bringing to us, also what we have with Firestone, there's huge differences between compounds. I might be wrong, but I think it's going to be a great show.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for Alex Palou.

Q. Tire deg, tell us about that. Are there particular

sections of the track, any areas you're feeling that are adding to the deg this year compared to last?

ALEX PALOU: Lower-speed corners, last corner, turn two, a little bit in I would say three. Those are the biggest areas. Maybe a little bit, yeah, three and four. Kind of middle speed. High speed is good. We have so much downforce that kind of doesn't feel like it's been a huge difference on grip. The lower speed, when you go on power, you feel it. You feel the tires, you have one really good lap, then degrades a little bit, which is great. I think that's how it should be. It makes it more fun.

Q. When you talk about fighting for pole, fighting over a 10th, to look and see you're on the same 10th, just wild.

ALEX PALOU: I don't like it. I don't like it, especially if I'm second (smiling).

Yeah, it's great, man. It's so tough to put a lap together, especially at this place. I think it's so great to see that we're all so close. I'm sure that Scott feels like he could have got another 10th if he puts like a perfect lap. I feel the same way. At the end, the mistakes or the not perfect lap that he does, the same that I do, that's why we're so close.

Yeah, it's super cool. I think even tomorrow is going to be very tight. But I think the different strategies are going to make for a lot of passing.

Q. Usually they say when a driver clinches a championship, he can go into the last race of the year and take more risks, gambles. Is that true? Do you enter it any different? Will you roll the strategy differently than you might if the championship wasn't already decided?

ALEX PALOU: No. I just feel I'm happier this weekend. I mean, I'm obviously more relaxed. At the same time my job is still the same. I know that the team, yeah, everybody in the team is pushing to try and get the win. I'm on the same boat. I just want to win. I want to finish the season on a high.



I think it doesn't help anybody if we're just giving up because we won the championship. Yeah, we'll try and fight this guy and everybody else that is fighting for the race tomorrow.

But yeah, be fun.

Q. What kind of bulldog is the guy sitting next to you? He's pretty fierce. What is he like to race against?

ALEX PALOU: That's more like a lion (smiling).

No, I mean, he puts some really good laps. He's on pole. He was the best today.

Q. Alex, did you and your team get any chance to celebrate the championship? Because of the quick turnaround, was there no celebration?

ALEX PALOU: Not really. Not really. You guys made me work a lot after Milwaukee with media, till very late. Everybody left already.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Poor you. Feel so bad for you.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, me, too (smiling).

I mean, we kind of celebrated together. I think not until the season is over. We had to prepare this race, simulator, meetings, fly here. No, we haven't had time.

At the same time I feel like every time that we're together, we're kind of celebrating.

Q. How much, if any, is the track different this year than a year ago?

ALEX PALOU: Very different but at the same time it doesn't really... I feel like there are corners that are very different, but there's others that kind of make it feel the same, if that makes sense.

I think it's more also Firestone, we have a little bit softer tires, which I think that's why we see a bit more deg. In my opinion, that's what it's going to make the race a lot more interesting, as well, with bigger differences between tire compounds, high tire deg, we've seen people make it work in three stops or four stops. It will be an interesting one.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, congratulations on another front-row start. Good luck in the race tomorrow.

ALEX PALOU: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Scott McLaughlin joins us. Third NTT P1 award of the season.

Congratulations. 250 by the way for Team Chevrolet. Another big milestone there. Your thoughts. It was close.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, it was close. I don't know if all of us did a really good lap. That's what is so hard about Laguna. If you can do it enough, be committed in the right spots.

Yeah, I felt like from the jump this weekend, we've come with a philosophy we've been working on the last, I don't know, four months or something like that, basically since our Mid-Ohio test. Been feeling better and better. Put it all together today.

Really proud of Raul, my engineer. We've been clicking. I've been saying it. It just feels really good right now. Really proud for him and the team.

Proud for Chevrolet. That's fantastic. To be the guy that's won 249 and 250 as well. We've had some good times together, for sure. Here's to many more.

Really proud. Felt like a lot of hard work. It's been hard the last couple years, especially on road courses, not only for me but the team. I feel like we're really starting to just find a bit of direction. We got a long way to go to be consistent week in, week out as well. We're working hard. Really proud.

THE MODERATOR: Strong qualifying performances like this, is that something going into the off-season that you can hang your hat on a little bit?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The biggest thing for us was road courses was almost our hurdle, bogey. We felt good on short ovals, felt good at Indy. On street tracks I feel like I've had really good speed there from the jump. I haven't really worried about that car.

The road course car is something we've really struggled with, and this tire. Personally, but I think as a team as well, now just to get a pole is a really good motivating thing for the whole team.

We have a long way to go for tomorrow. There's no doubt I think we've got great pace on both compounds. We'll see where it leads.

Really, really happy for Raul, to be honest. This is his pole. He's a great friend of mine. Had an up-and-down season just like I have the last few. Just really cool to see him happy and jovial.



THE MODERATOR: Questions for Scott.

Q. You and Raul on the new driver-engineer relationship, second half of the season, that curve is going up. What's working now? What have you found?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, he's just at lot more comfortable with the tire, with the car, how the tracks change. Yeah, temperature adjustment. So finicky in INDYCAR, you can miss it just by a bee's thing.

If you just miss it, you're off, you're out. There's been a couple times where we've had pretty good pace and we've missed the Fast 12. It doesn't show our pace.

I'm so happy to have qualified well for him today and prove that the trajectory, where we've been going with the car is great. Like I said, this is his pole more than anything.

Q. Can you share how great race engineers engineer the cars, but the most successful ones the engineer is engineering the driver...

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We're very good friends. My wife calls him my second wife. We text all the time (smiling). We're always talking and thinking about the car and the race car. We're talking about the 500 today. It's great to have a guy like that.

Ben was like that for me, but he was very engineering, where Raul is probably a little bit more, like, driver. Helps me with a little bit driving. Why can't you do that? What do I need to do with the car to make you do that?

He calls me out if I'm slow here, whatever. That's a good thing. Not that Ben didn't do it, but just a little bit different way we do it.

I've learned a lot about the race car this year, what different parts do. I think the guy next to me before is where he excels. Raul has known him since he was like four years old. I have a bit of a book in terms of how good he is. It's been nice to learn off that a bit because everyone needs to race to his level.

Q. Are you sick?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I yelled way too much on the in-lap. I just lost my voice. I was great this morning. Fine. Good as gold.

Q. You see Alex here, if he wins, it's like okay, another win. Already won the title. What would a win for you

and your team mean or do for your season?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It would mean a lot. Obviously I want that more than anything. You've seen the last events how hard I want it, how aggressive I want to be.

Like, it's not about forcing anything. I'm just dotting our Is, crossing our Ts. I think we're on a great trajectory right now.

You're chasing Alex. You're chasing what they do. Their excellence is high. They don't miss a beat. He's qualified on the front row again, he's going to be a contender tomorrow. He does that week in, week out. We need to get to that level. It's nice to win a race here or there, but I want to be competing week in, week out. That's the only way to win a championship.

Absolutely, I want to win the race. I want to win races in the future. I know we can. We have the speed. It's all about getting that consistency back, which I think we're slow getting back.

Q. To win it in the last race of the year before the long off-season, would that almost be like a mic drop moment for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Make not mic drop, but it would be a really good motivating feature. I think this is great, the pole. We've been really executing well in our race. To have track position tomorrow is a great start. We'll see what we've got.

Q. Looking at today and then looking at yesterday, the ambient temperature and track temperature are pretty consistent across the hour and a half. You'd have to assume that's going to be the same tomorrow. Is that going to play into the tire deg as well, pit stops, two tire compounds? Are we going to see lots of choices available?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's going to be interesting. I feel great on both compounds. It's going to be how they both deg. It's nice to have a consistent temperature more for the baseline, you can trust those reads you get each time you're on track.

Unsure until this afternoon when we got in practice how it's going to react the long runs. But it has been helpful to be pretty consistent with the balance and know roughly what I need from the car.

Q. Looking at the season as a whole, having the pole in the first race, obviously here, it's got to be a confidence booster long-term for you?

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, no, for sure. It's an awesome deal. I'm proud of that. I'm too inconsistent. I need to be more consistent throughout the whole season if I'm going to compete with these guys.

I have the speed. I don't doubt that by any means. I know I can win races. I've done it before. If I want to win a championship, which is the ultimate goal, I need to be better in the mid-season and consistent throughout the whole season.

THE MODERATOR: St. Pete seems like a long time ago.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It does.

THE MODERATOR: Get some warm tea for the throat and best of luck tomorrow.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

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